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Balzac
The illustrious
Gaudissart

CENTRAL

Honoré de Balzac

LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE

The Human Comedy

PROVINCIAL LIFE

VOLUME VI

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Daniel Hernandez

IN THE RUE D'ARTOIS

"Then," said the drummer, looking at the polished back of the florist, "I become a shareholder in the journals, like Finot, one of my friends, the son of a hatter, who has now thirty thousand francs income, and who is going to be made peer of France!"

The *Edition Définitive* of the *Comédie Humaine* by HONORÉ DE BALZAC, now for the first time completely translated into English.

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THE ILLUSTRIOUS GAUDISSART. THE MUSE OF THE DEPARTMENT. IN ONE VOLUME. TRANSLATED BY WILLIAM WALTON, AND ILLUSTRATED WITH FOUR ETCHINGS.

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THE ILLUSTRIOUS GAUDISSART

TO MADAME LA DUCHESSE DE CASTRIES

THE ILLUSTRIOUS GAUDISSART

*

The commercial traveller, a personage unknown to antiquity, is he not one of the most curious figures created by the manners and customs of the present epoch ? is he not destined, in some order of things, to mark the great transition which, in the eyes of critical observers, welds the period of material development and improvement to that of intellectual development and improvement ? Our century will bind together the reign of isolated force, abounding in original creations, and the reign of force uniform, but levelling, equalizing all productions, throwing them together in masses, and obeying a principle of unity, the last expression of societies. After the saturnalia of intelligence generally diffused, after the last efforts of the civilizations which accumulate the treasures of the earth on one point, does not the gloom of barbarism always arrive ? Is not the commercial traveller to ideas just what our stage-coaches are to packages and men ? he puts them in a vehicle,

sets them in motion, knocks them against each other; he gathers up, in the luminous centre, his due freight of rays and scatters them through the sleepy outside population. This human pyrophorus is an ignorant scientist, a juggler hoaxed by himself, an incredulous priest who, nevertheless, preaches all the better his mysteries and his dogmas. A curious figure! this man has seen everything, he knows everything, he is acquainted with all the world. Saturated with the vices of Paris, he can affect the easy credulity of the province. Is he not the link which joins the village to the capital, although essentially he is neither Parisian nor provincial, for he is a traveller? He sees to the bottom of nothing; of men and localities, he learns the names; of things, he appreciates the surfaces; he has his particular yardstick for each special piece of measuring; in short, his eye glances off objects and does not penetrate them. He interests himself in everything, and nothing really interests him. A jester and a boon companion, apparently interested in all parties, he is usually a patriot at the bottom of his heart. An excellent mimic, he knows how to assume alternately the smile of affection, of contentment, of good-nature, and then leaves them all to return to his true character, to a normal condition in which he reposes. He is obliged to be an observer, under penalty of renouncing his trade. Is he not continually obliged to sound men by a simple look, to divine their actions, their manners and customs, their solvency above all; and—that he may not lose his time—to decide

suddenly as to the chances of success? Thus the habit of deciding promptly in every case, makes him essentially a judge of men and things; he assumes, he discourses like an expert on the theatres of Paris, on their actors and on those of the provinces. Then he knows all the good and all the evil places in France, *de actu et visu*. He will pilot you at need to either vice or to virtue with the same easy assurance. Endowed with the eloquence of a hot-water spigot which can be turned on at will, is he not able with equal ease to shut off and to turn on his collection of prepared phrases which flow without stop and produce upon the victim the effect of a moral *douche?* A sprightly story-teller, he smokes, he drinks; he wears trinkets, he imposes upon the commonplace people, passes for a lord in the villages, never allows himself to be *made tired*,—a slang of his own—and knows how to slap his pockets at the proper moment to make his money jingle, so as not to be taken for a thief by the servants, eminently suspicious as they are in the bourgeois households into which he penetrates. As to his activity, is it not the least quality of this human machine? Neither the kite swooping upon its prey, nor the stag doubling to escape the dogs and throw the hunters off the track, nor the hounds scenting the game at a distance, can be compared to the rapidity of his flight when he scents a *commission*, to the neatness with which he trips up his rival's heels that he may get ahead of him, to the art with which he noses, he feels, he discovers by instinct an

opportunity to place his goods. How many superior qualities are there not required for the making of such a man! Do you find, in any country, many of these diplomats of the ground floor, of these consummate negotiators speaking in the name of calicoes, of jewelry, of the cloth-trade, of wines, and frequently more skilful than the ambassadors, who, for the most part, have only empty forms? No one, in France, entertains any doubt concerning the incredible ability incessantly displayed by the travelling drummers, these intrepid affronters of negations, who, in the farthermost borough, represent the genius of civilization and the Parisian inventions grappling with the good sense, the ignorance or the routine of the provinces. Can we ever forget here those admirable manœuvres which knead the intelligence of the populations, by treating by word of mouth the most refractory masses, and which resemble those indefatigable polishers whose files lick into smoothness the hardest porphyries! If you would wish to know the power of the tongue and the convincing pressure brought to bear by phrases upon the most rebellious écus, those of the small landed proprietor buried in his country mud, listen to the discourse of one of these grand dignitaries of the Parisian industry for the profit of which trot about, strike and function these intelligent pistons of the steam-engine called Speculation.

"Monsieur," said to a learned political economist the director-cashier-manager-general-secretary and administrator of one of the most celebrated com-

panies for insurance against fire, "Monsieur, in the provinces, of five hundred thousand francs' worth of policies that are renewed, not more than fifty thousand francs are paid up voluntarily; the four hundred and fifty thousand francs remaining are brought into us by the insistence of our agents who go among the insured who are in arrears and *worry* them until they have signed their new policies, frightening them and beating them by terrifying narrations of conflagrations, etc. Thus, eloquence, the labial flux, counts for nine-tenths in the ways and means of our business."

To speak, to make one's self listened to, is not that to seduce? A nation which has its two Chambers, a woman who lends her two ears, are equally undone. Eve and her serpent represent the eternal myth of a daily fact which commenced with the world, and which will perhaps finish with it.

"After a conversation of two hours, any man should be yours," said a retired attorney.

Let us take a turn around this commercial traveller! Let us examine this figure! Do not forget the olive-colored redingote, nor the cloak, nor the stock in morocco leather, nor the pipe, nor the cotton shirt with blue stripes. In this figure, so original that it resists all rubbing, how many divers natures will you not discover? Behold! what an athlete, what an arena, what arms,—himself, the world and his tongue! Intrepid navigator, he embarks, furnished with a few phrases, to go and fish for five or six thousand francs in the polar seas, in

the country of the Iroquois, in France! Is it not a question of extracting, by operations purely intellectual, the gold buried in the hiding-places in the provinces, to extract it without pain! The fish of the rural departments will not rise to the harpoon or torches, and can be taken only by the seine, the net, the most gentle of traps. Can you think now without shuddering, of the deluge of phrases which, at the break of day, recommences its endless cascades all over France? Now that you know the species, here is the individual.

There exists in Paris an incomparable drummer, the paragon of his kind, a man who possesses in the highest degree all the conditions requisite for his success. In his speech there are to be found at the same time vitriol and bird-lime,—bird-lime with which to catch his victim, to entangle him and make him sticky; vitriol with which to dissolve the hardest calculations. His *particular line* was *hats*; but his talent and the art with which he was able to capture customers had acquired for him so great a commercial celebrity that the dealers in the *article Paris* all paid court to him to persuade him to deign to take charge of their commissions. Thus, when on his return from his triumphal marches he sojourned in Paris, he was constantly invited to weddings and festivals; in the provinces, the correspondents pampered him; in Paris, the great houses caressed him. Welcomed, fêted, nourished everywhere; for him, to breakfast or to dine alone came to be a debauch, a pleasure. He led the life of a sovereign, or, better, that of a

journalist. But was he not indeed the living feuilleton of Parisian commerce? His name was Gaudissart, and his fame, his credit, the eulogies with which he was overwhelmed, had procured for him the surname of the *illustrious*. Wherever this fine fellow entered, whether it were an office or an inn, a salon or a diligence, a garret or a banker's residence, everyone exclaimed on seeing him: "Ah! there is the illustrious Gaudissart." Never was there a name more in harmony with the style, the manners, the physiognomy, the voice, the language of any man.* Everything smiled on the drummer, and the drummer smiled on all. *Similia similibus*, he was like homœopathy. Endless puns, a big laugh, the figure of a monk, the complexion of a Cordelier, a general Rabelaisian atmosphere; garments, body, mind and face were all in accord to proclaim drollery, broad jesting, in his whole person. Frank in business affairs, a good fellow, a story-teller, you will have recognized in him the "obliging gentleman" of the grisette, who climbs elegantly to his place on the imperial of the diligence, gives his hand to the lady timid over her descent from the coupé, makes a joke over the postilion's great handkerchief, and sells him a hat; smiles at the maid, catches her round the waist or by the heart; imitates at table the gurgling of a bottle by filliping with his finger on his stretched cheek; knows how to draw in beer by sucking in the air between his lips; taps with heavy strokes

* *Se gaudir*—to be merry, to live in clover.
Gaudriole—free discourse, broad jests.

of his knife on the champagne glasses without breaking them and says to the others : " Do that ! " which impresses the timid travellers ; contradicts those who are well informed, presides at the table and gobbles up the best morsels. A capable man, moreover, he could at times leave all his jestings and appear quite serious when, throwing away the end of his cigar, he would say, looking at a town : " I am going to see what stuff these people have in them ! " Gaudissart became then the most subtle, the most skilful of ambassadors. He knew how to enter as an officer of the administration into the presence of the sub-prefect, as a capitalist into that of the banker, as a man of religion and a monarchist into that of the royalist, as a bourgeois into that of the bourgeois, in short, he was everywhere that which he should be, leaving Gaudissart at the door and taking him up again when he came out.

Up to 1830 the illustrious Gaudissart had remained faithful to the *article Paris*. As it addresses itself to the greater number of human fancies, the divers branches of this commerce had enabled him to observe the innermost recesses of hearts, had instructed him in the secrets of his attractive eloquence, in the manner of untying the strings of purses most firmly knotted, of arousing the desires of wives, of husbands, of children, of servants, and persuading them to satisfy them. None knew better than he, the art of enticing dealers by the fascinations of a bargain, and of walking off at the moment when the desire arrived at its paroxysm. Full of gratitude to

the hat trade, he would say that it was in dealing with the exterior of the head that he had learned to comprehend the interior ; he was accustomed to pull the hood over people's eyes, to throw himself at their heads, etc. His jests upon the subject of hats were inexhaustible.

Nevertheless, after August and October, 1830, he quitted the hat trade and the *article Paris*, abandoned the commissions of the commerce of mechanical and visible things, in order to launch himself in the more elevated spheres of Parisian speculation. He abandoned, he said, matter for thought, the manufactured products for the infinitely more pure elaborations of the intelligence. This requires an explanation.

As every one knows, the break-up of 1830 brought to life again a number of old ideas which the skilful speculators undertook to rejuvenate. Since 1830 more especially, ideas have become property ; and, as has said a writer clever enough not to publish anything, there are stolen to-day more ideas than handkerchiefs. Perhaps, some day, we shall see a Bourse for ideas ; but already, good or bad, ideas are quoted, are gathered in, are of consequence, are carried, are sold, are realized and bring in profit. If he do not find any ideas to sell, the speculator endeavors to get certain words into favor, gives them the consistency of an idea, and lives on these words as the bird does on its grains of millet. You need not laugh ! A word is worth an idea in a country in which the label of a bag has greater at-

traction than the contents. Have we not seen the book trade exploiting the word *picturesque,* when literature has killed the word *fantastic?* Thus the exchequer has conceived the intellectual tax, it has accurately estimated the field of advertisements, registered the prospectuses and weighed the thoughts at the Stamp Office, Rue de la Paix. In becoming a matter of commerce, intelligence and its products naturally obey the laws of other manufacturing interests. Thus it happens that ideas conceived in their cups by the brains of some of these Parisians in appearance indolent, but who wage mental battles while emptying bottles or discussing the leg of a pheasant, were delivered, the day after their cerebral birth, to certain travelling salesmen charged with presenting skilfully, *urbi et orbi,* in Paris and in the provinces, the toasted cheese of the announcements and prospectuses by means of which are captured, in the mousetrap of the enterprise, that rodent of the rural departments commonly called, sometimes the subscriber, sometimes the shareholder, sometimes corresponding member, sometimes contributor or patron, but always, everywhere, a ninny.

"I am a ninny!" has exclaimed more than one poor proprietor, attracted by the prospect of being the *founder* of something, and who, in the end, has seen a sum of a thousand or twelve hundred francs founder in this doubtful sea.

"The subscribers are ninnies who will not comprehend that, in order to come to the front in the

kingdom of intellect, more money is required than to travel in Europe," etc., says the speculator.

There exists, then, a perpetual combat between the dilatory public which refuses to pay the Parisian imposts, and the collectors who, living on their receipts, lard the public with new ideas, baste it with enterprises, roast it with prospectuses, spit it on flatteries, and end by eating it with some new sauce in which it is smothered, and with which it intoxicates itself, like a fly in plumbago. Thus, since 1830, what has not been lavished in order to stimulate in France the zeal, the self-respect, *of the intelligent and progressive masses!* Titles, medals, diplomas, a sort of Legion of Honor for the commonalty of martyrs, have rapidly succeeded each other. In short, every one of the manufactories of intellectual products has discovered a pimento, a special ginger, its great delight. Hence, premiums, hence, anticipated dividends; hence, that conscription of celebrated names levied without the knowledge of the unfortunate artists who bear them and who thus find themselves actively co-operating in more enterprises than the year has days,—for the law has not foreseen the theft of names. Hence, this rape of ideas, which quite as in the slave markets of Asia, the exploiters of the public mind tear from the paternal brain, scarcely yet hatched, and strip and drag before the eyes of their stupefied sultan, their *Schahabaham*, this terrible public, which, if they do not amuse it, strikes off their head by taking away their peck of gold.

This craze of our epoch, then, reacted upon the illustrious Gaudissart, and in this manner. A certain company which insured against loss of life and of capital happened to hear of his irresistible eloquence, and proposed to him unheard-of advantages, which he accepted. The bargain concluded, the treaty signed, the drummer was taken to be weaned to the secretary-general of the administration, who loosened the intelligence of Gaudissart from its swaddling-bands, expounded to him the mysteries of the business, instructed him in its slang, demonstrated the mechanism of it to him piece by piece, dissected for him the special public which he would have to exploit, stuffed him with phrases, nourished him with answers to improvise, provisioned him with unanswerable arguments; and, in short, sharpened the edge of the tongue which was to operate upon life in France. Now, the chubby infant responded admirably to the cares which were lavished upon it by monsieur the secretary-general. The directors of the insurance against loss of life or of capital vaunted so highly the illustrious Gaudissart, showed him so many attentions, displayed so strongly in the light—in the sphere of high banking and of high intellectual diplomacy—the talents of this living prospectus, that the financial directors of two journals, celebrated at that time and since dead, conceived the idea of employing him for the gathering-in of subscriptions. *Le Globe*, the organ of the Saint-Simonian doctrine, *Le Mouvement*, a Republican journal, drew the illustrious Gaudissart into their

editorial rooms and each proposed to him ten francs a head for every subscriber if he brought in a thousand; but only five francs if he captured only five hundred. The "line" of *political journals* not interfering with the *insurance* "line," the bargain was concluded. Nevertheless, Gaudissart claimed an indemnity of five hundred francs for the week during which he was obliged to assimilate the doctrine of Saint-Simon, citing the prodigious efforts of memory and intelligence necessary to become thoroughly posted on this *article*, and to be able to argue conveniently about it, "so as not to be taken in yourself," as he said. He asked nothing of the Republicans. In the first place, he inclined to Republican ideas, the only ones which, according to the Gaudissart philosophy, could bring about a rational equality; then Gaudissart had already dipped into the conspiracies of the French *carbonari;* he was arrested, but released because of lack of evidence against him; finally, he observed to the bankers of the journal that, since July, he had allowed his moustaches to grow, and that he now lacked nothing but a certain cap and a pair of long spurs to adequately represent the Republic. During a whole week, he therefore went to have himself Saint-Simonized in the mornings at the *Globe*, and hastened to learn in the afternoons in the insurance offices the subtleties of the financial language. His aptitude, his memory, were so prodigious that he was able to start out about the 15th of April, the date at which he usually opened his campaign

every year. Two great business houses, affrighted by the falling off in their trade, seduced, as it was said, the ambitious Gaudissart and determined him to take their commissions also. The king of drummers showed himself merciful in consideration of their being old friends, and also because of the enormous premiums which they allowed him.

"Listen, my little Jenny—" said he, in a fiacre, to a pretty florist.

All truly great men love to allow themselves to be tyrannized over by a feeble being, and Gaudissart had his tyrant in Jenny; he was bringing her back at eleven o'clock from the Gymnase, to which he had conducted her, in grand toilet, into a proscenium box of the first row.

"On my return, Jenny, I will furnish your chamber, and in the very best manner. That big Mathilde, who rasps you with her comparisons, her real India shawl brought by the couriers of the Russian embassy, her silverware and her Russian prince—who appears to me a very great humbug—will have nothing more to say. I consecrate to the adornment of your chamber all the *Children* that I shall make in the provinces."

"Well now, that is very nice!" cried the florist. "How then, monster of a man, you speak quietly to me of making children, and you think that I will permit that sort of work?"

"Ah, there! are you getting stupid, my Jenny? —That is a way of speaking we have in our trade."

"It is very pretty, your trade!"

"But listen then; if you talk all the time, you will always be right."

"I mean to be right all the time! Upon my word, you are taking things easy!"

"You will not then let me explain? I have taken under my protection an excellent idea, a journal which they are going to publish for children. In our line, the drummers, when they have made in a town, we will suppose, ten subscribers to the Children's Journal, say: 'I have made ten *Children;*' as, if I make there ten subscribers to the journal called *Le Mouvement,* I would say: 'I have made this evening ten *Mouvements.*' Do you understand now?"

"That is nice! You are going into politics then! I see you already at Sainte-Pélagie, to which I shall have to trot every day. Oh! when you start out to love a man, if you only knew what you were getting into, on my word of honor, you would be left to manage your own affairs, you men! Come now, if you are going off to-morrow, we will not bother ourselves with any such disagreeable things; they are too stupid."

The fiacre stopped before a pretty house newly erected in the Rue d'Artois, in which Gaudissart and Jenny ascended to the fourth floor. There lived Mademoiselle Jenny Courand, who was generally considered to have been secretly married to Gaudissart, a rumor which the drummer did not deny. In order to maintain her despotism, Jenny Courand compelled the illustrious Gaudissart to ob-

serve a thousand little details, menacing him always with prompt abandonment if he failed in the most minute. Gaudissart must now write to her from every town in which he stopped and render her an account of his slightest action.

"And how many *Children* will it require to furnish my chamber?" she asked, throwing off her shawl and seating herself before a good fire.

"I get five sous for each subscription."

"Beautiful! And it is with five sous that you pretend you are going to make me rich! not unless you go as long as the Wandering Jew, and unless you have your pockets well sewed up."

"But Jenny, I will make thousands of *Children!* Just think, the children have never had a journal of their own. However, I am very stupid to try to explain to you business affairs, you understand nothing of these things."

"Well then, tell me then, tell me, Gaudissart, if I am so stupid, why do you love me?"

"Because you are stupidly—sublime! Listen, Jenny. Don't you see that, if I take *Le Globe, Le Mouvement,* the insurance and my *articles Paris,* instead of earning eight or ten miserable thousand francs a year by breaking my back, like a Mayeux, I shall be able to bring back twenty to thirty thousand francs from each journey."

"Unlace me, Gaudissart, and do it right, do not pull me about."

"Then," said the drummer, looking at the polished back of the florist, "I become a shareholder in

the journals, like Finot, one of my friends, the son of a hatter, who has now thirty thousand francs income, and who is going to be made peer of France! When you think that the little Popinot—Ah! *Mon Dieu!* but I forgot to say that Monsieur Popinot was yesterday appointed Minister of Commerce—why should I not have some ambition, I myself? Eh! eh! I would know how perfectly to pick up the gabble of the tribune and might become minister, and a swaggering fellow! Wait now, listen to me:"

"Messieurs," he said, taking his stand behind an easy-chair, "the press is neither an instrument nor a commerce. Considered in its political aspect, the press is an institution. Now, we are obstinately disposed here to see everything politically; therefore,—he took breath—therefore, we have to examine if it is useful or injurious, to be encouraged or to be suppressed, if it should be taxed or free,—grave questions! I do not feel that I shall waste the time, always so precious, of the Chamber, in examining this article and in bringing its conditions to your notice. We are marching toward an abyss. Certainly the laws are not furnished as they should be—"

"What do you say to that?" he said, looking at Jenny. "All the orators make France march toward an abyss; they say that or they speak of the chariot of state, of tempests and of the political horizons. Don't I know all the tricks! I have the *knack* of every business. Do you know why? I

was born with a caul. My mother kept my caul, I will give it to you! Therefore, I shall soon be in power, I shall!"

"You will?"

"Why should I not be Baron Gaudissart, peer of France? Have they not already twice made Monsieur Popinot deputy in the fourth arrondissement? He dines with Louis-Philippe! Finot is going, they say, to be Counselor of State! Ah! if they should send me to London as ambassador, it is I who say it to you that I would *stump* the English. Never has anyone pulled the wool over the eyes of Gaudissart, the illustrious Gaudissart. Yes, never has anyone got the better of me, and never will anyone get the better of me, in whatever line it may be, politics or impolitics, here as in any other place. But, for the present, it is necessary that I should devote myself to each, to the *Globe*, to the *Mouvement,* to the *Children* and to the *article Paris.*"

"You will get yourself caught with your journals. I bet that you will not get as far as Poitiers before you are nabbed."

"What will you wager, *mignonne?*"

"A shawl."

"Good! if I lose the shawl, I will return to my *article Paris* and the hat trade. But, get the best of Gaudissart! never, never!"

And the illustrious drummer struck an attitude before Jenny, looked at her proudly, his hand thrust in his waistcoat, the head in three-quarter view, a Napoléonic attitude.

"Oh! aren't you funny! What have you had to eat to-night?"

Gaudissart was a man of thirty-eight years of age, of medium stature, big and fat, like a man accustomed to rolling around in a diligence; a face as round as a pumpkin, full colored, regular in feature and similar to those classic visages adopted by the sculptors of all countries for the statues of Plenty, Law, Force, Commerce, etc. His protuberant stomach took on the shape of a pear; his legs were small, but he was agile and nervous. He took Jenny half-undressed and carried her to her bed.

"Keep quiet, *emancipated woman!*" he said. "You do not know what the emancipated woman is, the Saint-Simonism, the antagonism, the Fourierism, the criticism, and the passionate exploitation; well, it is—in short, it is ten francs by subscription, Madame Gaudissart."

"Upon my word of honor, you are going crazy, Gaudissart."

"Always more crazy for you!" he exclaimed, throwing his hat upon the florist's divan.

The next morning, Gaudissart, after a notable déjeuner with Jenny Courand, set off on horseback, in order to visit the chief places of the canton, the exploration of which had been particularly recommended to him by the divers enterprises to the success of which he had devoted his talents. After having employed forty-five days in beating up the country between Paris and Blois, he remained for two weeks in the latter city, occupied with his correspondence and

in visiting the *bourgs* of the department. The evening of his departure for Tours he wrote to Mademoiselle Jenny Courand the following letter, the conciseness and the charm of which cannot be equalled by any recital, and which proves, moreover, the particular legality of the ties by which these two persons were united :

Letter of Gaudissart to Jenny Courand

" My dear Jenny, I think that you will lose your bet. Like Napoléon, Gaudissart has his star ; and will have no Waterloo. I have triumphed everywhere under the given conditions. The insurance business is doing very well. I have, between Paris and Blois, placed nearly two millions ; but, in proportion as I advance toward the centre of France, the heads become singularly more hard, and consequently the millions infinitely more rare. The *article Paris* goes along on its comfortable little road. It is a ring on the finger. With my old trick I spit them perfectly, these good shopkeepers. I placed a hundred and sixty-two Ternaux cashmere shawls in Orléans. I do not know, upon my word of honor, what they will do with them, unless they put them back on the backs of their sheep. As to the article journals, the devil ! that is another pair of sleeves. Great, holy good Lord ! what a lot of whistling it takes to teach these individuals a new tune. I have as yet only made sixty-two *Mouvements*. That is, in my whole route, a hundred less than the Ternaux shawls in a single town. These humbugs of Republicans, they do not subscribe at all ; you talk with them, they talk, they are quite of your opinion, and you are presently fully agreed to overturn everything that exists. You think then that the man will subscribe ? Ah ! well, yes, he does nothing of the kind ! It is enough that he has three inches of ground, enough to grow a dozen cabbages, or enough wood to make himself a toothpick, my good man then begins to talk of the consolidation of properties, of imposts, of returns, of

indemnities, a heap of stupidities, and I expend my time and my saliva in patriotism. It is a bad business! Generally speaking, the *Mouvement* is flabby. I write so to these messieurs. This disgusts me, considering my opinions. As for the *Globe*, that is of another breed. When you speak of new doctrines to people whom you think likely to be interested in these fads, it would seem that you were proposing to them to set fire to their houses. It is all very well for me to say to them that it is for the future, self-interests properly understood, enterprises in which nothing can be lost; that man has now preyed upon man for a sufficiently long time, and that woman has been a slave, that it is necessary to bring about the triumph of the great providential thought and to obtain a more rational coördination of the social order, in short, all the reverberation of my phrases. Ah! well yes, when I open up these ideas, the people in the provinces shut up their cupboards, as if I were going to carry away something of theirs, and ask me to take myself off. They are stupid, these geese! *Le Globe* is no good. I have said to them:

"'You are too far advanced; you are going forward, that is all very well; but results are wanted, the provinces love results.'

"However, I have already done a hundred *Globes*, and, considering the thickness of these country headpieces, that is a miracle. But I promise them so many fine things that I do not know, upon my word of honor, what the Globules, Globists, Globards or Globiens, will do to realize them; but, as they have told me that they would have the world ordered infinitely better than it is, I go ahead and prophesy at the rate of ten francs a subscription. There was a farmer who thought that that concerned lands, because of the name, and I stuck him into the *Globe*. Bah! he will take hold of it, that is sure, he has a protuberant forehead, all the protuberant foreheads are ideologists. Ah! talk to me of the *Children!* I have made two thousand *Children* between Paris and Blois. A nice little business! There is not very much to be said. You show the little vignette to the mother, hiding it from the child because

the child wishes to see it; naturally, the child does see it, it pulls Mamma by her dress until it gets its journal, because Papa has *dot* his journal. Mamma has on a dress worth twenty francs, and does not want to have it torn by her little dear; the journal only costs six francs, there is economy in it, the subscriptions flow freely. An excellent thing, it is a real need, it is placed between candy and pictures, two eternal necessities of childhood. They are reading already, these desperate infants!

"I have had here, at the table d'hôte, a quarrel, apropos of these journals and my opinions. I was eating peacefully by the side of a monsieur, with a gray hat, who was reading *Les Débats*. I said to myself:

"'I must try my tribunal eloquence. Here is one who is for the dynasty, I will endeavor to cook him. This triumph will be a famous proof of my ministerial talents.'

"And I set myself to work, beginning by praising his journal to him. What do you think of that! that was drawing it out fine enough. From the egg to the chicken, I set myself to gradually getting the better of my man, launching upon him all the four-horse phrases, the reasonings in F sharp and the whole blessed machine. Everyone listened to me, and I saw a man who had the July movement in his moustaches ready to bite at the *Mouvement*. But I don't know how it was that I allowed to escape inappropriately the word blockhead. Bah! then you might have seen my dynastic hat, my gray hat, a bad hat, for that matter, made in Lyons, half-silk, half-cotton, rear up and take the bit between his teeth. For my part, I reassumed my grand air, you know, and I said to him:

"'Ah there! monsieur, you are a singular fellow! If you are not content, I will give you satisfaction, I fought in July.'

"'Although the father of a family,' he said to me, 'I am ready to—'

"'You are the father of a family, my dear monsieur,' I said to him. 'Have you any children?'

"'Yes, monsieur.'

"'Eleven years of age?'

"'About that.'

"'Well, monsieur, the *Journal des Enfants* is about to appear,—six francs a year, one number a month, two columns, edited by the loftiest literary talent, a journal well gotten up, solid paper, engravings from the clever crayons of our best artists, like real East Indian designs, the colors of which will not fade.'

"Then I let fly my broadside. There was a confused father! The quarrel ended by a subscription.

"'It is only Gaudissart who can do such tricks as that!' said the little cricket of a Lamard to that great imbecile Bulot, relating the scene to him in the café.

"I go off to-morrow for Amboise. I will do Amboise in two days, and I will write you then from Tours, where I am going to try to measure myself against the countries the most colorless with regard to intelligent and speculative things. But, on the word of Gaudissart, they shall be whacked, they will be whacked! whacked! Adieu, my little one! Love me always, and be faithful. Fidelity, *under all circumstances*, is one of the qualities of the emancipated woman. Who is it that kisses you on the eyes?

"Thy FÉLIX for ever."

Five days later, Gaudissart departed one morning from the hotel of the *Faisan*, where he lodged while in Tours, and went to Vouvray, a rich and populous canton, the peculiar genius of which seemed to him to be susceptible of being exploited. Mounted on his horse, he trotted along the causeway, thinking no more of his phrases than the actor thinks of the rôle which he has played a hundred times. The illustrious Gaudissart went along, admiring the landscape, and proceeding carelessly, without suspecting that in the joyous valleys of Vouvray would perish his commercial infallibility.

Here, a few explanations upon the peculiar genius of Touraine become necessary. The sly, story-telling, bantering, epigrammatic spirit with which each page of the work of Rabelais is impressed, expresses faithfully the Tourangian spirit, fine and polished as it should be in a country in which the kings of France long held their court; a spirit ardent, artistic, poetic, voluptuous, but of which the first impulses quickly disappear. The softness of the air, the beauty of the climate, a certain facility of existence and the genial manners there soon smother the sentiment of art, contract the largest heart, corrode the most tenacious of wills. Transplant the Tourangian, his qualities develop and produce great things, as has been proven in the most diverse spheres of activity, Rabelais and Semblançay, Plantin the printer and Descartes; Boucicault, the Napoléon of his time, and Pinaigrier, who painted the greater number of stained glass windows in the cathedrals; then Verville and Courier. Thus the Tourangian, so remarkable abroad, when at home remains like the Indian on his mat, like the Turk on his divan. He employs his wit in mocking his neighbor, in rejoicing, and arrives at the end of life happy. Touraine is the veritable abbey of Thélême, so vaunted in the book of *Gargantua;* there are to be found there, as in the poet's work, the complying sisterhood, and the good cheer so celebrated by Rabelais is there enthroned. As to the slothfulness, it is sublime, and admirably expressed by this popular saying: "Tourangian, do you want some

soup?" "Yes." "Bring your porringer." "I am no longer hungry." Is it to the joy of the vineyard, is it to the harmonious softness of the most beautiful landscapes in France, is it to the tranquillity of a country to which foreign arms have never penetrated, that is due the soft abandon of these easy and pleasant manners? To these questions, there is no reply. Go into this Turkey of France, you will remain there indolent, lazy, happy. Were you as ambitious as was Napoléon, or a poet as was Byron, an unknown, invincible force obliges you to keep your poetry for yourself and converts into dreams your ambitious projects.

The illustrious Gaudissart was about to meet there, in Vouvray, one of those indigenous jokers, the jests of whom are offensive only by the very perfection of the jesting, and with whom he had to sustain a cruel contest. Rightly or wrongly, the Tourangians greatly love to inherit from their parents. Now, the doctrine of Saint-Simon was there particularly held in hatred and vilipended, but as they hold in hatred, as they vilipend in Touraine, with a disdain and superiority of pleasantry worthy of the land of good stories and of tricks played on the neighbors,—a spirit which disappears day by day before that which Lord Byron has called the English *cant*.

After having landed at the *Soleil d'or*, an inn kept by Mitouflet, a former grenadier of the Imperial Guard who had espoused a rich vineyard owner, and to whom he solemnly confided his horse,

Gaudissart, to his undoing, took his way to the house of malice in Vouvray, to that of the merry-andrew of the *bourg*, the wag obliged by his rôle and by his nature to maintain his locality in cheerfulness. This rural Figaro, an ex-dyer, lived in the enjoyment of an income of seven or eight thousand francs, of a pretty house seated on the hill, of a little plump wife, of robust health. For the last ten years he had had nothing to do but to take care of his garden and his wife, to marry his daughter, to take his hand at cards in the evenings, to know all the scandals that pertained to his jurisdiction, to interfere with the elections, to war with the large proprietors and organize good dinners; to trot about on the causeway, to go to see what was going on in Tours and plague the curé; finally, for his greatest drama, to await the sale of a piece of property enclosed among his vines. In short, he led the Tourangian life, the life of a little city in the country. He was, moreover, the most imposing notability among the bourgeoisie, the head of the small, jealous, envious proprietors, ruminating and peddling about in great contentment evil speakings and calumnies against the aristocracy, beating everything down to his own level, enemy of superiority of any kind, despising it even with the admirable calmness of ignorance. Monsieur Vernier—thus was named this little great personage of the *bourg*—was just finishing his déjeuner, between his wife and his daughter, when Gaudissart presented himself in the room, through the windows of which might be seen the

Loire and the Cher, one of the most cheerful dining-rooms in all the country.

"Is it to Monsieur Vernier himself?—" said the drummer, bending his vertebral column with so much grace that it seemed to be elastic.

"Yes, monsieur," replied the malicious dyer, interrupting him and throwing upon him a scrutinizing look, by which he recognized immediately the species of man with whom he had to deal.

"I come, monsieur," Gaudissart continued, "to claim the assistance of your enlightenment to direct me in this canton, in which Mitouflet has informed me that you exercise the greatest influence. Monsieur, I have been sent into the departments for an enterprise of the highest importance, undertaken by a number of bankers who desire—"

"Who desire to trick us out of something," said Vernier, laughing, accustomed as he was to dealing with the commercial travellers and to see them coming to their point.

"Exactly," replied the illustrious Gaudissart with easy insolence. "But you must know, monsieur, since you have so fine a tact, that you cannot trick people unless they find some profit in allowing themselves to be tricked. I entreat you, therefore, not to confound me with the common drummers who base their success upon trickery or upon importunity. I am no longer a drummer. I was, monsieur, I glory in it. But, to-day, I have a mission of the highest importance and one which should cause me to be considered by superior minds as a man who

devotes himself to the enlightenment of his country. Deign to listen to me, monsieur, and you will see that you will have gained a great deal in the half-hour of conversation which I have the honor to entreat you to grant me. The most celebrated bankers of Paris have taken a part in this affair, not fictitiously, as in some of those shameful speculations which I, for my part, designate as *rat-traps;* no, indeed, it is no longer anything of the kind; I do not lend myself, for my part, to the peddling of such *fool-catchers*. No, monsieur, the best and the most respectable houses of Paris are enlisted in this enterprise, both as interested parties and as a guarantee—"

Here, Gaudissart launched into the full tide of his eloquence, and Monsieur Vernier allowed him to continue, listening with an apparent interest which deceived Gaudissart. But, at the mere word of *guarantee*, Vernier had ceased to pay attention to the drummer's rhetoric, he was thinking of some good trick to play him, in order to deliver from these Parisian pests a country justly termed barbarous by the speculators who can bite nothing out of it.

At the top of a delicious valley, known as *la Vallée coquette* because of its sinuosities, of its windings which spring up at every step and seem all the more beautiful as you advance, whether in mounting or descending the joyous route, lived in a little house surrounded by an inclosure of vines, a half-witted man named Margaritis. Of Italian origin, Margaritis was married, had no children, and his wife took care

of him with a courage that was generally appreciated. Madame Margaritis certainly ran considerable danger in the company of a man who, among other manias, insisted upon carrying always upon himself two long-bladed knives, with which he sometimes threatened her. But who does not know the admirable devotion with which the inhabitants of the provinces consecrate themselves to the care of their suffering, perhaps because of the reproach which is attached to a bourgeois wife who abandons her child or her husband to the public care of a hospital? Then, who does not know, also, of the great repugnance which the provincials entertain for paying the charge of a hundred louis or a thousand écus required by Charenton or by the insane asylums? If anyone spoke to Madame Margaritis of the doctors Dubuisson, Esquirol, Blanche, or others, she preferred, with a noble indignation, to keep her three thousand francs in keeping her *goodman*. The incomprehensible whims which his mania inspired in this goodman having much to do with the dénoûment of this adventure, it will be necessary to indicate the most striking of them. Whenever it rained in torrents, Margaritis immediately went out to walk about bare-headed among his vines. In the house, he was constantly asking for the newspaper; to content him, his wife or his servant gave him an old newspaper of the Indre-et-Loire department; and in the course of the last seven years he had not yet perceived that he always read the same number. Perhaps a physician would not have observed with-

out interest the relation which existed between the constant recurrence of these demands for the paper and the atmospheric variations. The most constant occupation of this lunatic was to observe the condition of the sky, relative to its effects upon the vines. Usually, when his wife had company, which was almost every evening, the neighbors, taking pity upon her, came to play *boston* with her. Margaritis remained silent, placing himself in a corner from which he did not stir ; but, when ten o'clock sounded from his clock, enclosed in a great oblong case, he rose at the last stroke with the mechanical precision of those figures set in motion by a spring in the little chimes of the German toys, he advanced slowly toward the players, threw upon them a look very like the automatic glance of the Greeks and the Turks exposed upon the Boulevard du Temple at Paris, and said to them : " Be off ! " At certain periods, this man recovered his former sanity, and then gave to his wife excellent advice concerning the sale of his wines ; but he then became extremely troublesome, he stole the tid-bits from the cupboards and devoured them secretly. Sometimes, when the usual visitors to the house entered, he would reply to their questions with civility, but more often his answers were most incoherent. Thus, to a lady who asked him : " How do you feel to-day, Monsieur Margaritis ? "—" I have shaved ; and you ? " he replied to her. " Are you better, monsieur ? " another asked him.—" Jerusalem, Jerusalem," he responded. But, usually, he looked at his guests

with a stupid air, without saying a word, and his wife then said of him : " The goodman hears nothing to-day." Two or three times in the course of five years it happened to him, always about the period of the equinoxes, to fall into a fury at this observation, to draw one of his two knives and to cry : " This strumpet dishonors me!" Otherwise, he drank, ate, walked about, like a man in perfect health. Thus everyone had finally come to pay him no more respect and attention than to a great piece of furniture. Among all his whimsicalities, there was one of which no one could discover the meaning ; for, in the long run, the clever ones of the countryside had finally commented upon and explained the most unreasonable actions of this lunatic. He always insisted upon having a bag of meal in the house, and upon keeping two casks of wine of his vintage, without permitting anyone to touch either the meal or the wine. But, when the month of June arrived, he insisted upon the sale of the bag and of the two casks of wine with all the obstinacy of a lunatic. Madame Margaritis nearly always then pretended to him to have sold the two puncheons at an exorbitant price, and handed him the money, which he hid, without either his wife or his servant being able, even when they watched him, to discover the hiding-place.

The evening before the day on which Gaudissart came to Vouvray, Madame Margaritis had found more trouble than ever in deceiving her husband, whose reason seemed to have returned.

"I do not know, indeed, how I shall get through to-morrow," she had said to Madame Vernier. "Just imagine, the goodman insisted upon seeing his two casks of wine. He has so bedevilled me all day that it was necessary to show him two full casks. Our neighbor, Pierre Champlain, had, luckily, two casks which he had not been able to sell; and, at my entreaty he rolled them into my cellar. Ah there! what do you think! the goodman, since he has seen the casks, declares that he is going to sell them off himself!"

Madame Vernier had just confided to her husband the trouble in which Madame Margaritis found herself, a moment before the arrival of Gaudissart. At the first word of the commercial traveller, Vernier proposed to himself to match him with the goodman Margaritis.

"Monsieur," replied the ex-dyer, when the illustrious Gaudissart had fired his first broadside, "I will not conceal from you the difficulties which your enterprise must encounter here. Our country is a country which goes along in the rough, *suo modo*, a country into which a new idea never penetrates. We live as our fathers lived, amusing ourselves by eating four meals a day, by occupying ourselves in the cultivation of our vines and disposing well of our wines. In all business dealings, we endeavor quite simply to sell things for more than they cost. We remain in this rut without either God or the Devil being able to get us out of it. But I am going to give you a bit of good advice, and good advice is as good as having

an eye in your hand. We have in this *bourg* a former banker in whose enlightenment I have, I particularly, the greatest confidence ; and, if you obtain his approval, I will join mine to it. If your propositions offer real advantages, if we are convinced of it, at the word of Monsieur Margaritis, which will have mine with it, there will be found in Vouvray, twenty wealthy houses in which all the purses will open and will take your vulnerary."

On hearing the name of the lunatic, Madame Vernier raised her head and looked at her husband.

"Wait, to be sure! my wife is just intending, I think, to pay a visit to Madame Margaritis, to whose house she is going with one of our women neighbors. Wait just a moment, these ladies will conduct you there. You will take Madame Fontanieu," said the ex-dyer, winking at his wife.

To name to her the most amusing, the most eloquent, the most jovial gossip in the whole country, was not that to notify Madame Vernier to select witnesses for a careful observation of the scene which would take place between the commercial traveller and the lunatic, so that the *bourg* might have something with which to amuse itself for a month? Monsieur and Madame Vernier played their parts so well that Gaudissart did not conceive the slightest suspicion and fell plump into the trap; he offered his arm gallantly to Madame Vernier and thought that he had made during the journey, the conquest of the two ladies, with whom he was quite wonderful in wit, piquancy and uncomprehended puns.

The house of the pretended banker was situated at the entrance of the Coquette Valley. This dwelling, known as La Fuye, was in no wise remarkable. On the ground floor was a large wainscoted room, on each side of which was a bed-chamber, that of the goodman and that of his wife. This large room was entered through a vestibule which served as a dining-room, and with which the kitchen communicated. This ground floor, destitute of the exterior elegance which distinguishes the humblest houses in Touraine, was surmounted by a mansard story to which you mounted by a stairway built outside the house, supported against one of the gable ends and covered by a pent roof. A little garden, full of marigolds, syringas and elders, separated the house from the enclosure. Around the courtyard rose the buildings used in the wine making.

Seated in his main room, near a window, in an easy-chair in yellow Utrecht velvet, Margaritis did not rise when he saw Gaudissart and the two ladies enter, he was thinking of selling his two casks of wine. He was a dry-looking man whose skull, bald in front and garnished with a few sparse hairs behind, was pear-shaped. His sunken eyes, surmounted by heavy black eyebrows and surrounded by very dark circles, his nose like the blade of a knife, his salient maxillary bones and his hollow cheeks, his generally extended lines, everything, even to his immeasurably long and flat chin, contributed to give to his physiognomy a peculiar expres-

sion, that of an ancient professor of rhetoric or of a rag-picker.

"Monsieur Margaritis," said Madame Vernier to him, "come now, stir yourself a little! Here is a monsieur whom my husband sends to you, he must be listened to attentively. Leave your mathematical calculations, and talk to him."

On hearing these words, the lunatic rose, looked at Gaudissart, made him a sign to be seated and said to him:

"Let us talk, monsieur."

The three women went into Madame Margaritis's bed-chamber, leaving the door open, so that they might hear all, and be able to intervene if necessary. Scarcely were they installed when Monsieur Vernier came softly through the enclosure, caused the window to be opened for him and entered noiselessly.

"Monsieur," said Gaudissart, "has been in business?—"

"Of State," replied Margaritis, interrupting him. "I effected the pacification of Calabria in the reign of the king Murat."

"Well, he has gone to Calabria now," said Monsieur Vernier under his breath.

"Oh! then we shall understand each other perfectly," replied Gaudissart.

"I am listening to you," responded Margaritis, taking the attitude of a man who is posing for his portrait before a painter.

"Monsieur," said Gaudissart, turning the key of his watch and giving it in his abstraction an in-

cessant rotary and regular movement which interested the lunatic very much and perhaps contributed to keep him quiet; "Monsieur, if you were not a superior man"—here the lunatic bowed,—"I should content myself by enumerating to you the material advantages of this enterprise, the psychological motives of which are worthy of being exposed to you. Listen! of all social riches, is not time the most precious; and to economize it, is not that to enrich ourselves? Now, is there anything in life that consumes more time than anxieties over what I call *boiling the pot,* a common phrase but one which states the question neatly! Is there also anything which devours more time than the lack of securities to offer those from whom you ask money at a period when, poor for the moment, you are rich in hope?"

"Money,—yes, that's right," said Margaritis.

"Well, monsieur, I have been sent into the departments by a company of bankers and capitalists, who have perceived the enormous loss which is thus sustained, in time and consequently in intelligence or in productive activity, by the men of the future. Now, we have conceived the idea of capitalizing for these men this same future, of discounting for them their talents, in discounting for them what?—time *dito,* and of insuring its value to their heirs. It is no longer a question of economizing time, but of giving it a price, a quotation, of representing in a pecuniary sense the productions which you presume you will obtain in this region of the intellect, by

representing the mental qualities with which you are endowed and which are, monsieur, live forces, like a waterfall, like a steam-engine of three, ten, twenty, fifty horse-power. Ah ! this is progress, movement toward a better order of things, a movement due to the activity of our epoch, essentially progressive, as I will prove to you, when we shall come to consider the principles involved in a more logical coördination of the interests of society. I will explain my meaning by practical examples. I leave purely abstract reasoning, that which we designate, we others, the mathematics of ideas. Instead of being a landed proprietor, living on your income, you are a painter, a musician, an artist, a poet—"

"I am a painter," said the lunatic, as in a parenthesis.

"Good, so be it, since you comprehend so well my metaphor, you are a painter, you have a fine future before you, a rich future. But I will go still further—"

On hearing these words, the lunatic examined Gaudissart with an anxious air to see if he intended to leave the house, and was reassured only when he perceived that he remained seated.

"You may be even nothing at all," said Gaudissart continuing, "but you feel yourself—"

"I feel myself," said the lunatic.

"You say to yourself: 'I, I shall be a minister.' Very well, you a painter, you an artist, you a man of letters, you a future minister, you figure up your

hopes, you tax them, you rate yourself, I will suppose, at a hundred thousand écus—"

"You are bringing me then a hundred thousand écus?" said the lunatic.

"Yes, monsieur, you will see. Either, your heirs will necessarily finger them if you should die, since the company engages to deliver the money to them, or you will receive them for your works of art, for your fortunate speculations, if you live. If you have deceived yourself, you may even commence again. But, when you have once, as I have had the honor to say to you, fixed the amount of your intellectual capital, for it is an intellectual capital, grasp this idea firmly, intellectual."

"I understand," said the lunatic.

"You sign a policy of insurance with the company, which recognizes a value of a hundred thousand écus, to you painter—"

"I am a painter," said the lunatic.

"No," resumed Gaudissart; "to you, musician; to you, minister, and engages to pay them to your family, to your heirs if, by your death, the hopes, *the pot over the fire,* based upon the intellectual capital, should be overturned. The payment of a premium suffices to consolidate thus your—"

"Your funds," said the lunatic, interrupting.

"Why, naturally, monsieur. I see that monsieur has been in business."

"Yes," said the lunatic, "I founded the Banque Territoriale of the Rue des Fossés-Montmartre, at Paris, in 1798."

"For," resumed Gaudissart, "in order to pay the intellectual capitals, which each one recognizes in himself and attributes to himself, does it not follow that the generality of the insured should pay a certain premium, three per cent, an annuity of three per cent? Thus, by the payment of an insignificant sum, a nothing, you guarantee your family against the unfortunate consequences of your death."

"But I am living," said the lunatic.

"Ah! if you should have a long life! that is the objection usually made, a commonplace objection, and you will understand that, if we had not foreseen it, demolished it, we should not be worthy of being —what?—what are we, after all? book-keepers in the great Bureau of Intellect. Monsieur, I do not say this to you, but I meet everywhere people who have the pretension of teaching something new, of revealing some line of reasoning or other, to those who have grown gray in the business!—on my word of honor, it is pitiful. But such is the way of the world, I do not pretend to reform it. Your objection, monsieur, is destitute of sense."

"*Quésaco?*—" said Margaritis.

"This is why. If you live and possess the qualities which are estimated in your policy of insurance against the chances of death, follow me carefully—"

"I am following."

"Well, you have succeeded in your enterprises! you have been obliged to succeed precisely because

of the aforesaid policy of insurance; for you have doubled your chances of success in disembarrassing yourself of all the anxieties which one has when one drags with one a wife, children, whom one's death would reduce to the most frightful poverty. If you have succeeded, you have then realized on the intellectual capital, for which the insurance was a bagatelle, a real bagatelle, a pure bagatelle."

"An excellent idea!"

"Is it not, monsieur?" resumed Gaudissart. "I have named this beneficent fund, I have, the mutual insurance against poverty!—or, if you prefer, the discounting of talent. For talent, monsieur, talent is a bill of exchange which nature gives to the man of genius, and which sometimes has a very long time to run—eh! eh!"

"Oh! what fine usury!" cried Margaritis.

"Eh! the devil! he is shrewd, the goodman. I have deceived myself," thought Gaudissart. "It is evident that I must overawe my man by the highest considerations, by my humbug, No. 1.—Not at all, monsieur," he went on aloud, "for you who—"

"Will you accept a glass of wine?" asked Margaritis.

"Willingly," replied Gaudissart.

"Wife, give us then a bottle of that wine of which we have two casks left.—You are here at the head of Vouvray," said the goodman, showing his vines to Gaudissart. "The close Margaritis!"

The servant maid brought glasses and a bottle of

wine of the year 1819. The goodman Margaritis poured it very carefully into a glass and presented it solemnly to Gaudissart, who drank it.

"But you have caught me, monsieur," said the commercial traveller, "this is Madeira, true Madeira."

"I know it," said the lunatic. "The inconvenient quality of the wine of Vouvray, monsieur, is that it can not be used either as ordinary wine or with the entremets; it is too generous, too strong; therefore it is sold to you in Paris for Madeira after having been mixed with brandy. Our wine is so luscious and sweet that many dealers in Paris, when our vintage is not good enough for Holland and Belgium, purchase our wines; they mingle them with the wines of the neighborhood of Paris, and make of them thus Bordeaux wines. But that which you are drinking at this moment, my dear and very worthy monsieur, is a wine for the king, the head of Vouvray. I have two casks of it, two casks only. Those who love the great wines, the high wines, and who wish to have served on their tables, qualities superior to the usual ones of commerce,—as do several houses of Paris who take a pride in their wines—are furnished directly by us. Are you acquainted with any persons who—?"

"Let us return to our business," said Gaudissart.

"We are doing so, monsieur," replied the lunatic. "My wine is *capiteux*—heady—*capiteux* agrees

with *capital* in etymology ; now, you are speaking of capitals—do you see ? *caput*, head ! head of Vouvray, all that goes together—"

"Thus it follows," said Gaudissart, "either you have realized on your intellectual capitals—"

"I have realized, monsieur. Would you like to take then my two casks ? I would arrange the terms very conveniently for you."

"No, I am speaking," said the illustrious Gaudissart, "of the insurance upon intellectual capitals and of financial operations concerning life. I resume my argument."

The lunatic grew quiet, resumed his former attitude and looked at Gaudissart.

"I say, monsieur, that in case of your death, the capital will be paid to your family without any difficulty."

"Without any difficulty."

"Yes, provided there is no suicide."

"A question of quibbling."

"No, monsieur. As you know, suicide is one of those acts always readily proved."

"In France," said the lunatic ; "but—"

"But abroad ?" said Gaudissart. "Well, monsieur, to finish with this point, I will say to you that ordinary death when abroad and death on the field of battle are outside of—"

"But what do you insure then ?—Nothing at all !" said Margaritis. "For my part, my Banque Territoriale was based upon—"

"Nothing at all, monsieur ?—" cried Gaudissart,

interrupting the goodman. "Nothing at all?—and sickness, and anxieties, and poverty, and the passions? But let us not go off into the exceptional cases."

"No, let us not go into these cases," said the lunatic.

"What results from this enterprise?" resumed Gaudissart. "To you, a banker, I will define the result exactly. A man exists, he has a future, he is in good standing, he lives by his art, he has need of money, he asks for it—Nothing. All civilization refuses money to this man who by his mind dominates all civilization, and is going to dominate it some day by his brush, by his chisel, by his speech, by an idea, by a system. An atrocious civilization! it has no bread for its great men who give it its luxury; it nourishes them only by insults and derision, this gilded strumpet!—The expression is strong, but I do not retract it. This unappreciated great man then comes to us, we recognize him as a great man, we salute him with respect, we listen to him and he says to us: 'Messieurs of the insurance upon capital, my life is worth so much; upon my productions I will give you so much per cent!' Well, what do we do? Immediately, without jealousy, we admit him to the superb festival of civilization as a most distinguished guest—"

"You need some wine, then," said the lunatic.

"—As a most distinguished guest. He signs his insurance policy, he takes our rags of paper, our miserable rags, which, vile rags as they are, have

nevertheless more power in them than has his genius. In fact, if he has need of money, everybody, at sight of his policy, will lend him money. At the Bourse, at the bankers, everywhere, and even with the usurers, he will be able to find money because he offers security. Well, monsieur, is this not a gap to be filled up in the social system? But, monsieur, this is only a part of the operations undertaken by the life society. We insure debtors by means of another system of premiums. We offer interest during life at a rate graduated upon the age, on a scale infinitely more advantageous than have had up to the present the tontines, based upon mortality tables that are now recognized as false. As our society operates among the masses, the annuity holders have no cause to dread those reflections which sadden their old days—already so sad in themselves; reflections which necessarily attend them when their annuity is derived from an individual. As you see, monsieur, with us life has been computed in all its aspects—"

"Sucked at both ends," said the goodman; "but drink a glass of wine, you indeed deserve it. It will be necessary for you to line your stomach with velvet, if you are going to wag your jaw comfortably. Monsieur, the wine of Vouvray, well preserved, is a real velvet."

"What do you think of all that?" asked Gaudissart, emptying his glass.

"That is very fine, very new, very useful; but I like better the discounts on the territorial properties

which were made at my Bank in the Rue des Fossés-Montmartre."

"You are very right, monsieur," replied Gaudissart; "but that has been done, it is done over, it is made and remade. We have now the Mortgage Company which lends money on landed property and redeems it on a large scale. But is not that a small idea in comparison with that of solidifying hopes! solidifying hopes, coagulating — speaking financially—the desires for fortune of each one, assuring him of their realization! For this it has required our epoch, monsieur, an epoch of transition, of transition and of progress all at one time!"

"Yes, of progress," said the lunatic. "I admire progress, above all, that which is for the vines favorable—*un bon temps*—"

"*Le Temps!*" replied Gaudissart, without hearing Margaritis's phrase, "*Le Temps*, monsieur, a bad newspaper! If you read it, I am sorry for you—"

"The newspaper?" said Margaritis, "I think so indeed, I am passionately interested in newspapers. —Wife! wife! where is the newspaper?" cried he, turning toward the chamber.

"Well, monsieur, if you are interested in the papers, we are bound to understand each other."

"Yes, but, before hearing the newspaper, admit to me that you find this wine—"

"Delicious," said Gaudissart.

"Well then, let us finish the bottle between us."

The lunatic poured two fingers of wine into his own glass and filled Gaudissart's.

"Well, monsieur, I have two casks of that wine there. If you find it good, and you should wish to make an arrangement—"

"Precisely," said Gaudissart, "the Fathers of the Saint-Simonian faith have requested me to send to them the commodities which I—But shall we speak of their great and handsome journal? You who comprehend so well financial affairs, and who will give me your assistance to make them succeed in this canton—"

"Willingly," said Margaritis, "if—"

"I understand, if I take your wine. But it is very good, your wine, monsieur, it is incisive."

"They make champagne from it, there is a monsieur, a Parisian, who has come to make it here, in Tours."

"I believe it, monsieur. *Le Globe*, of which you have heard—"

"I have often traversed it," said Margaritis.

"I was sure of it," said Gaudissart. "Monsieur, you have a strong head, a head-piece that these messieurs call having horse-sense;—there is something of the horse in the heads of all great men. Now, one may well be a fine genius and live unknown. This is a farce which very generally comes to those who, notwithstanding their abilities, remain in obscurity, and which was near being the case of the great Saint-Simon, and that of Monsieur Vico, an able man who is beginning to assert himself. He is all right, Vico! I am well satisfied. Here, we

enter into the theory and the new formula of humanity. Attention, monsieur—"

"Attention," said the lunatic.

"The exploitation of man by man should have ceased, monsieur, on the day on which Christ,—I do not say Jesus Christ, I say Christ,—came to proclaim the equality of men before God. But this equality, has it not been, up to the present time, the most deplorable chimera? Now, Saint-Simon is the complement of Christ. Christ has had His day."

"He is then liberated?" said Margaritis.

"He has had His day, like Liberalism. But now there is something stronger before us, it is the new faith, it is the production free, individual, a social coördination which requires that each one should receive equitably his social salary according to his work, and shall not be exploited by the individuals who, without any capacity themselves, make *all* labor for the benefit of *one* only; hence the doctrine—"

"What will you do with the servants?" asked Margaritis.

"They will remain servants, monsieur, if they have the capacity only to be servants."

"Well then, of what good is the doctrine?"

"Oh! to judge of it, monsieur, it is necessary to place yourself at a very elevated point of view from which you can embrace clearly a general aspect of humanity. Here, we enter into full Ballanche! Do you know Monsieur Ballanche?"

"We do nothing else but that!" said the lunatic, who understood it *de la planche*—garden plots or beds.

"Good," resumed Gaudissart. "Well, if the palingenetic spectacle of the successive transformations of the *Globe* spiritualized touches you, transports you, moves you! well, my dear monsieur, the journal *Le Globe*, a good name which expresses its mission clearly, *Le Globe* is the cicerone which will expound to you every morning the new conditions under which will be brought about, in a short space of time, the moral and political transformation of the world."

"*Quésaco?*" said the other.

"I will make you comprehend this reasoning by a figure," replied Gaudissart. "If, when we were children, our nurses have taken us to Séraphin's, do we not require, we old men, pictures of the future? These messieurs—"

"Do they drink wine?"

"Yes, monsieur. Their house is established, I may well say it, on an excellent footing, a prophetic footing;—handsome salons, all the celebrities, grand receptions."

"Very well," said the lunatic, "the workmen who demolish have quite as much need of wine as those who build."

"Still greater reason, monsieur, when you demolish with one hand and reconstruct with the other, as do the apostles of the *Globe*."

"Then they need wine, wine of Vouvray, the

two casks which I have left, three hundred bottles, for a hundred francs, a bagatelle."

"How much does that come to per bottle?" said Gaudissart, calculating. "Let us see! there is the transportation, the tax, it would not get up to seven sous; but that would be a good bargain. They pay more for all other wines.—Good, I have my man," said Gaudissart to himself; "you want to sell me wine which I need, I am going to get the best of you.—Well, monsieur," he resumed, "men who dispute are on the point of coming to an agreement. Let us speak frankly, you have a great influence in this canton?"

"I think so," said the lunatic. "We are *the head* of Vouvray."

"Well, you have perfectly comprehended the business of intellectual capitals?"

"Perfectly."

"You have measured the whole scope of the *Globe?*"

"Twice—on foot."

Gaudissart did not hear, for he was absorbed in his own thoughts and listening only to himself as to a man sure to triumph.

"Now, with regard to the situation in which you are placed, I comprehend that you have nothing to insure at the age to which you have arrived. But, monsieur, you can induce others to insure, persons who, in the canton, either because of their personal value or because of the precarious position of their families, would wish to establish a capital for them-

selves. Then, by subscribing to the *Globe*, by supporting me with your authority in the canton for the investments in annuities for life, for they are fond of life annuities in the provinces ; well, we can come to an understanding about the two casks of wine. Will you take the *Globe ?* "

"I go on the globe."

"Will you give me your support with influential persons in the canton ? "

"I will support—"

"And—"

"And—"

"And I— But you will subscribe to the *Globe ?* "

"*Le Globe*, a good journal," said the lunatic, "a journal for life."

"For life, monsieur ?— Ah, yes, you are right, it is full of life, of strength, of science, stuffed with science, in fine condition, well printed, good dye, a fine nap. Ah ! it is not *rubbish, trifles, glittering stuff,* silk which tears when you look at it ; it is deep, it contains arguments on which you can meditate at your ease and which will make the time pass very agreeably in the depths of the country."

"That suits me," replied the lunatic.

"*Le Globe* costs a bagatelle, eighty francs."

"That does not suit me," said the goodman.

"Monsieur," said Gaudissart, "you have necessarily some little children."

"Very much," replied Margaritis, who had understood *you love* for *you have*.

"Well, the *Journal des Enfants,* seven francs a year."

"Take my two casks of wine, I will take a subscription for children, that suits me, a fine idea. Intellectual development, the child?— is not that man upon man, do you see?"

"You have hit it, monsieur," said Gaudissart.

"I've hit it."

"You consent then to pilot me through the canton?"

"Through the canton."

"I have your approbation?"

"You have it."

"Well, monsieur, I will take your two casks of wine at a hundred francs—"

"No, no, a hundred and ten."

"Monsieur, a hundred and ten francs, so be it, but a hundred and ten for the intellects of the doctrine, and a hundred francs for me. I make a sale for you, you owe me a commission."

"Charge it to them at a hundred and twenty—*cent vingt*—(*sans vin*—no wine)."

"That is a good pun. It is not only very strong, but also very spiritual."

"No, spirituous, monsieur."

"Better and better, just like at Nicolet's."

"I am like that," said the lunatic. "Come and see my close!"

"Willingly," said Gaudissart; "that wine is singularly heady."

And the illustrious Gaudissart went out with

Monsieur Margaritis, who promenaded him from one new vine sprig to another, from plant to plant, among his vines. The three ladies and Monsieur Vernier could then laugh at their ease, while watching in the distance the drummer and the lunatic, discussing, gesticulating, stopping, continuing their walk, talking with heat.

"Why has the goodman taken him away from us?" said Vernier.

Finally Margaritis came back with the commercial traveller, both of them walking with an accelerated step, like men in a hurry to terminate a business.

"The goodman has, by Jove! got the best of the Parisian!—" said Monsieur Vernier.

And, in fact, the illustrious Gaudissart wrote out, on the end of a card table, and to the great joy of the goodman, an order for the delivery of the two casks of wine. Then, after having read the drummer's agreement, Monsieur Margaritis gave him seven francs for a subscription to the *Journal des Enfants*.

"Till to-morrow, then, monsieur," said the illustrious Gaudissart, turning the key of his watch, "I shall have the honor of coming for you to-morrow. You may send the wine directly to Paris, to the address indicated, and you will receive a remittance."

Gaudissart was a Norman, and there was never any engagement for him that was not two-sided,—he wanted an agreement from Monsieur Margaritis who, content as is a lunatic who has gratified his

favorite wish, signed, not without reading, a contract to deliver two casks of wine of the close Margaritis. And the illustrious Gaudissart went away skipping, humming *Le roi des mers ne t'échappera pas!* to the inn of the *Soleil d'or,* where he conversed naturally with the host while waiting for dinner. Mitouflet was an old soldier ingenuously shrewd, as are the peasants, but who never laughed at a jest, like a man accustomed to the sound of cannon and to jesting under arms.

"You have some pretty able people about here," said Gaudissart to him, leaning against the door post and lighting his cigar at Mitouflet's pipe.

"How do you mean?" asked Mitouflet.

"Why, people very strongly set in their political and financial ideas."

"From whose house have you come then, if we may ask without indiscretion?" asked the inn-keeper ingenuously, skilfully and periodically expectorating between his lips, after the manner of smokers.

"From that of a coney named Margaritis."

Mitouflet threw upon his customer two glances of chilling irony.

"That is true enough, the goodman knows what is what! He knows too much for other people, they cannot always understand him."

"I can believe it, he understands thoroughly well the abstruse questions of finance."

"Yes," said the inn-keeper. "Therefore, for my part, I have always regretted that he was crazy."

"What, crazy?"

"Crazy, as one is crazy, when one is crazy," repeated Mitouflet; "but he is not dangerous, and his wife takes care of him. You came to an understanding, then?" continued, with the greatest coolness, the pitiless Mitouflet. "That is droll."

"Droll!" cried Gaudissart; "droll! but your Monsieur Vernier has then been making fun of me?"

"He sent you there?" asked Mitouflet.

"Yes."

"Wife, wife," cried the inn-keeper, "listen here. What has Monsieur Vernier done but sent monsieur to the goodman Margaritis?—"

"And what then could you say to each other, you two, my dear little monsieur," asked the wife, "since he is crazy?"

"He sold me two casks of wine."

"And you bought them?"

"Yes."

"But that is his mania, to sell wine,—he has none."

"Good!" said the drummer. "I will go, in the first place, to thank Monsieur Vernier."

And Gaudissart, boiling with anger, rushed off to the house of the ex-dyer, whom he found in his hall, laughing with the neighbors to whom he was already relating the story.

"Monsieur," said the prince of travellers, throwing upon him fiery glances, "you are a rogue and a blackguard, who, under penalty of being the worst

of convict-keepers, men whom I consider lower than the wretches under them, owe me reparation for the insult which you have put upon me by putting me in communication with a man whom you knew to be crazy. Do you hear me, Monsieur Vernier, the dyer?"

Such was the harangue which Gaudissart had prepared, like a tragedian ready for his entrance on the scene.

"What!" replied Vernier, animated by the presence of his neighbors, "do you think that we have not the right to make fun of a monsieur who disembarks in great state in Vouvray to demand of us our funds, under the pretext that we are great men, painters, poetasters; and who thus gratuitously assimilates us with people without a sou, without character, without hearth or lodging! What have we done to deserve that, we, fathers of families? A rogue who comes to propose to us to subscribe to *Le Globe*, a journal which preaches a religion in which the first commandment of God orders, if you please, that you shall not inherit from your father and your mother! Upon my sacred word of honor, the Père Margaritis says more sensible things. Moreover, of what are you complaining? You came to a perfect understanding, you two, monsieur. These messieurs can bear you witness that if you had talked to all the people in the canton, you would not have been so well understood."

"All that may seem excellent to you to say, but I consider myself insulted, monsieur, and you will give me reparation."

"Well, monsieur, I consider you insulted, if that is agreeable to you, and I will not give you reparation, for there is not enough reparation in this affair for me to give you any. What a buffoon he is!"

At this word, Gaudissart threw himself upon the dyer to cuff his ears; but the watchful Vouvrillons threw themselves between them, and the illustrious Gaudissart cuffed only the dyer's wig, which fell upon the head of Mademoiselle Claire Vernier.

"If you are not satisfied," said he, "monsieur, I shall remain until to-morrow at the hotel of the *Soleil d'Or;* you will find me there, ready to explain to you what is meant by giving reparation for an offence! I fought in July, monsieur."

"Well, you will fight in Vouvray," replied the dyer, "and you will remain here longer than you think."

Gaudissart went away, ruminating upon this reply, which he found full of evil omen. For the first time in his life, the drummer did not dine joyously. The *bourg* of Vouvray was thrown into emotion by the adventure of Gaudissart and of Monsieur Vernier. There had never been a question of a duel in that benign country.

"Monsieur Mitouflet, I must fight to-morrow with Monsieur Vernier; I do not know anyone here, will you serve as my second?" said Gaudissart to his host.

"Willingly," replied the innkeeper.

Scarcely had Gaudissart finished his dinner, when Madame Fontanieu and the assistant-mayor of

Vouvray came to the *Soleil d'or,* took Mitouflet to one side and represented to him how afflicting to the canton it would be if there should take place in it a violent death : they depicted to him the lamentable situation of the good Madame Vernier, and entreated him to arrange this affair in such a manner as to save the honor of the country.

"I will take charge of it," said the sly innkeeper.

In the evening, Mitouflet sent up to the drummer's room pens, ink and paper.

"What are you bringing me there?" asked Gaudissart.

"But you are going to fight to-morrow," said Mitouflet, "I thought that you would like to make some little disposition of your affairs, in short, that you might have something to write, for there are beings who are dear to us. Oh! that will not kill you. Are you skilful with arms? would you like to practise your hand? I have some foils."

"Yes, willingly."

Mitouflet returned with some foils and two masks.

"Now let us see!"

The host and the drummer both placed themselves on guard. Mitouflet, as a former provost of grenadiers, pinked Gaudissart sixty-eight times in succession, jostling him and backing him up against the wall.

"The devil! you are strong at it," said Gaudissart, out of breath.

"Monsieur Vernier is stronger than I am."

"The devil! the devil! I will then fight with pistols."

"I would advise you to do so, because, you see, by taking the great holster pistols and loading them up to the muzzles, there is never any risk, the pistols *scatter*, and each one retires with his honor satisfied. Let me arrange that! *Hein! sapristi!* two brave men would be very stupid to kill each other for a gesture."

"Are you sure that the pistols will *scatter* sufficiently? I should be vexed to kill that man, after all," said Gaudissart.

"You can sleep in peace."

The next morning, the two adversaries, a little pallid, met below the bridge of La Cise. The brave Vernier all but killed a cow that was passing at ten paces from him, on the edge of the road.

"Ah! you fired in the air," cried Gaudissart.

At these words, the two enemies embraced each other.

"Monsieur," said the drummer, "your jest was a little strong, but it was humorous. I am grieved to have addressed you as I did, I was beside myself; I consider you a man of honor."

"Monsieur, we will give you twenty subscriptions to the *Journal des Enfants*," replied the dyer, who was still pale.

"That being so," said Gaudissart, "why should we not take déjeuner together? Are not men who fight each other, on the point of understanding each other?"

"Monsieur Mitouflet," said Gaudissart, on returning to the hotel, "you should have a bailiff here?"

"Why?"

"Eh! I am going to send a summons to my dear little Monsieur Margaritis, that he may furnish me with two casks of his close."

"But he hasn't them," said Vernier.

"Well, monsieur, the affair can be arranged for twenty francs of indemnity. I do not wish that it should be said that your *bourg* has *pulled the wool* over the illustrious Gaudissart."

Madame Margaritis, frightened at the prospect of a suit in which the plaintiff could show a good cause, brought the twenty francs to the merciful drummer, who was spared, moreover, the trouble of doing business in one of the most joyous cantons of France, but one of the most recalcitrant to new ideas.

On his return from the southern countries, the illustrious Gaudissart occupied the first place on the coupé of the diligence of Laffitte and Caillard, where he had for neighbor a young man to whom he had been deigning, since they left Angoulême, to explain the mysteries of life, taking him doubtless for a child.

When they arrived at Vouvray, the young man cried:

"There is a beautiful site!"

"Yes, monsieur," said Gaudissart, "but the country is not bearable, because of the inhabitants.

You would have there a duel every day. Yes, just three months ago I fought one there," said he, pointing to the bridge of La Cise, "with pistols, with a cursed dyer; but—I *downed him!*—"

Paris, November, 1837.

THE MUSE OF THE DEPARTMENT

TO MONSIEUR LE COMTE FERDINAND DE GRAMONT

My dear Ferdinand, if the chances (*habent sua fata libelli*) of the world of literature should make of these lines a long souvenir, it would certainly be but a small thing in comparison with the trouble which you have taken, you the D'Hozier, the Chérin, the king-at-arms of the ÉTUDE DE MŒURS; you to whom the Navarreins, the Cadignans, the Langeaises, the Blamont-Chauvrys, the Chaulieus, the D'Arthezs, the D'Esgrignons, the Mortsaufs, the Valoises, the hundred noble houses which constitute the aristocracy of the COMÉDIE HUMAINE owe their fine devices and their so admirable coats of arms. Thus THE HERALDRY OF THE STUDIES OF MANNERS AND CUSTOMS, INVENTED BY FERDINAND DE GRAMONT, GENTLEMAN, is a complete history of French blazonry, in which you have forgotten nothing, not even the arms of the Empire, and which I shall preserve as a monument of Benedictine-like patience and of friendship. What a familiarity with the old feudal language in the *Pulchrè sedens, melius agens!* of the Beauseants! in the *Des partem leonis!* of the D'Espards! in the *Ne se vend!* of the Vandenesses! In short, what ingenious artifice in the thousand details of this learned iconography which serves to demonstrate to what lengths fidelity may be carried in my understanding, in which, you, poet, have wished to aid

Your old friend,

DE BALZAC.

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AT THE HOTEL DE LA BAUDRAYE

A moment of silence prevailed, Madame de la Baudraye, in examining Lousteau, found him arrayed as would be the most scrupulous dandy.

"There is no one but you in the world who can help me and offer me a perch, for I am drowning, and I have already swallowed more than one mouthful!"

THE MUSE OF THE DEPARTMENT

*

On the border of the province of Berri may be found, on the banks of the Loire, a town which by its situation invariably attracts the eye of the traveller. Sancerre occupies the culminating point of a chain of small mountains, the last undulations of the soil of the Nivernais. The Loire overflows the lands at the foot of these hills, leaving on them a yellow slime which fertilizes them, when it does not cover them with sand forever by one of those terrible floods which are equally common with the Vistula, that Loire of the North. The mountain, on the summit of which are grouped the houses of Sancerre, rises to a sufficient distance above the river to enable the little port of Saint-Thibault to make a living from the life of Sancerre. There the wines are shipped, there the staves are unloaded, in short, all the productions of the upper and lower Loire.

At the period of this history, the bridge of Cosne and that of Saint-Thibault, two chain bridges, were constructed. Travellers coming from Paris to San-

cerre by the route to Italy no longer crossed the Loire from Cosne to Saint-Thibault by a ferry ; is not that enough to say to you that the *chassé-croisé* of 1830 had taken place ? for the house of Orléans has everywhere developed material interests, but somewhat after the manner of those husbands who make presents to their wives with the money of the dot.

Excepting in that portion of Sancerre which occupies the plateau, the streets are more or less steep, and the town is surrounded by slopes called the Great Ramparts, a name which indicates with sufficient clearness the character of the great roads of the town. Beyond these ramparts extends a girdle of vineyards. The making of wine forms the principal industry and the most considerable commerce of the country, which possesses several growths of generous wines, with a good bouquet, similar enough to the products of Burgundy to deceive the common palates in Paris. Sancerre therefore finds a rapid demand in the Parisian cabarets, one sufficiently necessary, moreover, for wines that cannot be kept more than seven or eight years. Below the town are seated a few villages, Fontenay, Saint-Satur, which resemble suburbs, and the situation of which recalls the gay vineyards of Neuchâtel in Switzerland. The town has preserved some features of its ancient physiognomy, its streets are narrow and paved with pebbles taken from the bed of the Loire. There are still to be seen in it old houses. The tower, that remnant of the military

strength and of the feudal epoch, recalls one of the most terrible sieges of our religious wars, during which our Calvinists surpassed indeed the ferocious Cameronians of Walter Scott. The town of Sancerre, rich with an illustrious past, shorn of its military power, is in some sort devoted to an unfruitful future, for the commercial movement of the day follows the right bank of the Loire. This rapid description which you have just read demonstrates that the isolation of Sancerre will go on increasing, notwithstanding the two bridges which unite it to Cosne. Sancerre, the pride of the left bank, has at the most three thousand, five hundred souls, whilst in Cosne there are to-day more than six thousand. Within the last half-century, the character of these two towns seated facing each other has completely changed. Nevertheless, the advantages of the natural situation are on the side of the historic town, where, in every direction, an enchanting spectacle may be enjoyed, where the air is of an admirable purity, the vegetation magnificent, and where the inhabitants, in harmony with this smiling nature, are affable, good companions, and without any Puritanism, although two-thirds of the population have remained Calvinists. In such a condition of environment, if the inconveniences of the life in little towns are to be experienced, if you find yourself under the sway of that officious surveillance which makes of private life a life almost public,—in revenge, local patriotism, which will never replace the family spirit, is displayed in a high degree. Thus

the town of Sancerre is very proud of having given birth to one of the glories of the modern science of medicine, Horace Bianchon, and to an author of the second rank, Étienne Lousteau, one of the most distinguished feuilletonists. The arrondissement of Sancerre, indignant to find itself in submission to seven or eight great landed proprietors, the haughty barons of the elections, endeavored to shake off the electoral yoke of the particular doctrine which made of it its rotten borough. This conspiracy of offended self-loves was shipwrecked by the jealousy caused among the confederates by the prospect of the future elevation of one of the conspirators. When the result had demonstrated the radical fault of the enterprise, it was desired to remedy it by selecting for the champion of the country at the coming elections one of the two men who represent Sancerre so gloriously in Paris. This idea was an extremely advanced one for the provinces, where, since 1830, the nomination of parish notabilities has made such progress that statesmen become more and more rare in the elective Chamber. Moreover, this project, the realization of which was sufficiently doubtful, was conceived by the superior woman of the arrondissement, *dux femina facti,* but with considerations for her own personal interests. This conception had so many roots in this woman's past and included so nearly her whole future, that, without a lively and succinct description of her previous life, it would be difficult of comprehension. Sancerre, then, was proud of a

superior woman, long misunderstood, but who, about 1836, was in the enjoyment of a sufficiently pretty departmental renown. This epoch was also that in which the names of the two Sancerrois attained at Paris, each in his own sphere, to the highest degree, one of glory, the other of the fashion. Étienne Lousteau, one of the collaborators of the reviews, put his name to the feuilleton of a journal with eight thousand subscribers; and Bianchon, already first physician in a hospital, officer of the Legion of Honor and member of the Academy of Sciences, had just obtained his professor's chair. If this statement should not, for many people, carry with it a species of blame, it might be said that George Sand had created the *Sandism,* so true is it, morally speaking, that good is nearly always accompanied by evil. This sentimental leprosy has spoiled a great many women, who, without their pretensions to genius, would have been charming. Sandism has, however, this of good in it, that the woman who is attacked by it, carrying her pretended superiorities to the support of uncomprehended sentiments, is in some sort the *blue stocking* of the heart;—there then results from this less weariness, love somewhat neutralizing literature. Now, the example of George Sand has had for its principal effect the recognition of the fact that France possesses an exorbitant number of superior women, sufficiently generous to leave, up to the present time, the field open to the granddaughter of Marshal Saxe. The superior woman of Sancerre lived at La

Baudraye, city house and country house at once, situated at ten minutes' distance from the city, in the village, or, if you prefer, in the faubourg of Saint-Satur. The La Baudrayes of to-day, as has happened to many noble houses, have substituted themselves for the La Baudrayes whose name shone in the annals of the Crusades and is mingled with the great events of the history of Berri. This requires an explanation.

In the reign of Louis XIV., a certain eschevin named Milaud, whose ancestors had been bigoted Calvinists, became converted at the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. In order to encourage this movement in what was then one of the sanctuaries of Calvinism, the king appointed this Milaud to an important post in the department of Forests and Streams, gave him the arms and the title of Sire de la Baudraye by presenting him with the fief of the ancient and real Baudrayes. The heirs of the famous Captain La Baudraye fell, alas! into one of the traps set for the heretics by the royal ordinances and were hanged, a treatment unworthy of the *Grand Roi*. Under Louis XV., Milaud de la Baudraye, from simple squire became a knight, and enjoyed sufficient consideration to place his son as a cornet in the Musketeers. The cornet died at Fontenoi, leaving a son to whom the king Louis XVI. later gave a commission as Farmer-General in memory of this cornet killed on the field of battle. This financier, a fine wit, occupying himself with charades, with *bouts-rimés*, with sonnets to Chloris, lived

in the fashionable world, frequented the society of the Duc de Nivernois, and thought himself obliged to follow the nobility into exile ; but he took care to carry his capital with him. The rich *émigré* was thus enabled to sustain more than one noble house. Wearied with hoping, and perhaps with lending, he returned to Sancerre in 1800, and repurchased La Baudraye through a sentiment of self-love and of aristocratic pride explicable in a grandson of the eschevin, but who, under the Consulate, had so much less of a future that the ex-Farmer-General was able to reckon but little upon the prospects of his heir continuing the line of the new La Baudrayes. Jean-Athanase-Polydore Milaud de la Baudraye, the only child of the financier, more than puny at birth, was indeed the offspring of a blood early exhausted by the exaggerated pleasures to which the wealthy classes abandon themselves when they marry in the morning of a premature old age—and end thus by bringing down all the summits of society. During the exile, Madame de la Baudraye, a young girl without fortune, who had been married because of her nobility, had had the patience to bring up this yellow and sickly infant, on which she lavished that excessive love which mothers have in their hearts for abortions. The death of this mother, a Demoiselle de Castéran la Tour, contributed greatly to the return to France of Monsieur de la Baudraye. This Lucullus of the Milauds died, leaving to his son the fief without the right of dues on sales of inheritance, but ornamented with weathercocks

bearing his arms, a thousand golden louis, a sum of considerable importance in 1802, and his receipts for money lent to the most illustrious *émigrés*, contained in the portfolio of his poesies, with this inscription: *Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas!* If the young La Baudraye succeeded in living, he owed it to habits of a monastic regularity, to that economy of movement which Fontenelle preached as the religion of the valetudinarians, and above all, to the air of Sancerre, to the influence of that admirable site from which might be seen a panorama of forty leagues in the valley of the Loire. From 1802 to 1815 the little La Baudraye augmented his ex-fief by the addition of several fields and devoted much attention to the culture of the vine. In its early days, the Restoration appeared to him to be so tottering on its legs that he did not dare to go up to Paris too often to put in his claims; but, after the death of Napoléon, he endeavored to convert into money his father's poesy, for he did not comprehend the profound philosophy indicated by this mixture of credits and charades. The wine-grower lost so much time in getting himself recognized by Messieurs the Ducs de Navarreins and others—to use his own expression—that he returned to Sancerre, recalled by his dear vintages, without having obtained anything more than offers of service. The Restoration conferred so much lustre upon the nobility that La Baudraye desired to give an object to his ambition by giving himself an heir. This conjugal benefit appeared to him sufficiently problematical;

otherwise, he would not have delayed so long; but, toward the end of the year 1823, finding himself still on his legs at forty-three, an age which no physician, no astrologer, no midwife, would have dared to predict for him, he conceived hopes of finding the reward for his compulsory virtue. Nevertheless, his choice indicated so great a default of prudence, considering his sickly condition, that it was impossible for provincial malice not to see in it a profound calculation.

At this period, His Eminence Monseigneur the Archbishop of Bourges had just converted to Catholicism a young woman belonging to one of those bourgeois families which were the first props of Calvinism, and which, thanks to their obscure position or to certain arrangements made with Heaven, had escaped the persecutions of Louis XIV. Artisans in the sixteenth century, the Piédefers—whose name illustrated one of those grotesque surnames which the soldiers of the Reform gave themselves—had become honest cloth-merchants. Under the reign of Louis XVI., Abraham Piédefer had experienced such bad business that at his death, about 1786, he left his two children in a condition bordering on poverty. One of the two, Silas Piédefer, departed for the Indies, abandoning the modest inheritance to his elder brother. During the Revolution, Moïse Piédefer purchased national property, demolished abbeys and churches after the manner of his ancestors, and married—strangely enough—a Catholic, the only daughter of a member of the National

Convention who had died on the scaffold. This ambitious Piédefer died in 1819, leaving to his widow a fortune that had been compromised in agricultural speculations, and a little daughter, twelve years of age, of a surprising beauty. Brought up in the Calvinistic religion, this child had been named Dinah, in accordance with the custom of the Protestants of taking their Christian names from the Bible, so as to have nothing in common with the saints of the Roman Church. Mademoiselle Dinah Piédefer, placed by her mother in one of the best boarding-schools in Bourges, that of the Demoiselles Chamarolles, there became as celebrated by the qualities of her mind as by her beauty; but she found herself subordinated to the young and wealthy daughters of the nobility, who would later play in the world a much more important rôle than that of a plebeian whose mother was waiting on the results of the Piédefer liquidation. After having been able to elevate herself momentarily above her companions, Dinah wished to place herself at least on a level with them in life. She accordingly invented the plan of abjuring Calvinism, hoping that the cardinal would protect his spiritual conquest and occupy himself with her future. You may already judge of the superiority of Mademoiselle Dinah who, at the age of seventeen, had herself converted solely through ambition. The archbishop, filled with the idea that Dinah Piédefer should become the ornament of the world, endeavored to have her married. All the families to whom the prelate addressed himself,

were terrified by a young girl endowed with the manners of a princess, who was reputed to be the most clever of all the young women educated by the Demoiselles de Chamarolles and who, in the slightly theatrical solemnities of the distributions of prizes, always played the principal rôles. Assuredly, the income of three thousand francs which the domain of La Hautoy undivided between the mother and the daughter might bring in, would be but little in comparison with the expenditure in which the personal advantages of a creature so brilliant would inevitably involve a husband.

As soon as the little Polydore de la Baudraye had learned these details, which were discussed by all the circles of the society of the Département du Cher, he departed for Bourges, at the moment when Madame Piédefer, very zealous in her religious duties, had almost come to the determination—as had her daughter—to take the first dog with long ears that presented himself,—according to the expression common in Berri. If the cardinal was very happy to meet Monsieur de la Baudraye, Monsieur de la Baudraye was still more happy to accept a wife from the hands of the cardinal. The little man required from His Eminence the formal promise of his protection with the President of the Council, with the object of realizing on the obligations of the Ducs de Navarreins and others by seizing their indemnities. This method seemed to the skilful minister of the Pavilion Marsan a trifle too sharp; he made known to the vineyard-owner that his affairs would be

attended to in due time and place. Everyone can imagine the sensation produced among the Sancerrois bythe senseless marriage of Monsieur de la Baudraye.

"That can readily be explained," said the President Boirouge, "the little man, I have been told, was very much outraged to overhear, on the Mail, the handsome Monsieur Milaud, the deputy of Nevers, saying to Monsieur de Clagny, pointing to the towers of La Baudraye: 'That will come back to me!'—'But,' replied our procureur du roi, 'he may get married and have children.'—'He is prohibited from that!' You may imagine the hatred which an abortion like the little La Baudraye would vow to that colossus of a Milaud."

There existed at Nevers a plebeian branch of the Milauds which had so enriched itself in the cutlery business that the present representative of this branch had entered upon the career of the public ministry, in which he had been protected by the late Marchangy.

Perhaps it would be better to rid, once for all, this story in which morality plays a very important part, of the base material interests with which Monsieur de la Baudraye was so exclusively occupied by recounting briefly the results of his negotiations in Paris. This will, moreover, explain several mysterious passages in contemporary history, and the subjacent difficulties which the ministers during the Restoration encountered, on political grounds. The ministerial promises had so little result that Monsieur de la Baudraye appeared in Paris at the moment when the cardinal

was called there by the session of the Chambers. This is the manner in which the Duc de Navarreins, the first creditor menaced by Monsieur de la Baudraye, got out of the affair. The Sancerrois saw arrive one morning at the hotel de *Mayence*, where he was lodged, in the Rue Saint-Honoré, near the Place Vendôme, a confidant of the ministers who was well versed in liquidations. This elegant personage, who had come in an elegant cabriolet, and who was dressed in the most elegant manner, was obliged to mount to No. 37, that is to say, to the third floor, where in a little room, he found the provincial preparing a cup of coffee over the fire in his chimney-place.

"Is it to Monsieur Milaud de la Baudraye that I have the honor ?—"

"Yes," replied the little man, draping himself in his dressing-gown.

After having eyed this latter incestuous product of a former figured wrap of Madame Piédefer and a dress of the late Madame de la Baudraye, the negotiator found the man, the dressing-gown and the little earthenware furnace in which the milk was boiling in a tin saucepan so characteristic, that he judged all craftiness useless.

"I will bet, monsieur," said he audaciously, "that you dine for forty sous at Hurbain's, in the Palais-Royal."

"And why ?—"

"Oh ! I recognize you by having seen you there," replied the Parisian, maintaining his seriousness. "All the creditors of the princes dine there. You

know that scarcely ten per cent. is realized on the claims against the very greatest lords. I would not give you five per cent. for a claim against the late Duc d' Orléans—nor even against "—he lowered his voice—" against MONSIEUR—"

" You have come to purchase my vouchers ? " said the wine-grower, who thought himself clever.

" To purchase !—" exclaimed the negotiator ; " for whom do you take me ?—I am Monsieur des Lupeaulx, *maître des requêtes,* secretary-general of the ministry, and I come to propose to you an arrangement."

" Which one ? "

" You are not ignorant, monsieur, of the position of your debtor—"

" Of my debtors."

" Well, monsieur, you are acquainted with the situation of your debtors, they are in the king's good graces, but they are without money, and obliged to maintain a great display. You are not ignorant of the difficulties of the political situation ; —the aristocracy is to be reconstructed, in face of a formidable Third Estate. The desire of the king, who is greatly misjudged by France, is to create in the peerage a national institution, analogous to that of England. In order to realize this great conception, we shall require years of time and millions of money.—*Noblesse oblige !* the Duc de Navarreins, who, as you know, is the first gentleman of the chamber, does not deny his debt, but he cannot—Be reasonable ! Consider the political situation !

We are just issuing from the abyss of the revolutions. You are noble also !— Then, he cannot pay you—"

"Monsieur—"

"You are too quick," said Des Lupeaulx, "listen. —He cannot pay you in money ; well, as the man of intelligence that you are, take your pay in favors —royal or ministerial."

"What ! my father gave, in 1793, a hundred thousand—"

"My dear monsieur, do not recriminate ! Listen to a proposition of political arithmetic ;—the receiver's office of Sancerre is vacant, a former paymaster-general of the armies is entitled to it, but he has no chances ; you have the chances but you have no right to it ; you will get the office. You will fill it for the space of six months, then you will resign, and Monsieur Gravier will give you twenty thousand francs. Moreover, you will be decorated with the royal order of the Legion of Honor."

"That is something," said the wine-grower, much more attracted by the money than by the ribbon.

"But," resumed Des Lupeaulx, "you will recognize the bounties of His Excellency by returning to Sa Seigneurie le Duc de Navarreins all your claims against him—"

The wine-grower returned to Sancerre with the post of receiver of taxes. Six months later, he was replaced by Monsieur Gravier, who had the reputation of having been one of the most obliging financial

men under the Empire, and who was naturally presented by Monsieur de la Baudraye to his wife. As soon as he was no longer receiver, Monsieur de la Baudraye returned to Paris to have an explanation with his other debtors. This time he was appointed referendary, baron and officer of the Legion of Honor. After having sold the post of referendary, the Baron de la Baudraye paid several visits to his last debtors, and reappeared at Sancerre with the title of *maître des requêtes,* with the position of commissioner of the king for an anonymous company established in Nivernais, with six thousand francs of appointments, a real sinecure. The goodman La Baudraye, who was thought to have committed a folly, financially speaking, had thus made an excellent arrangement by marrying his wife. Thanks to his sordid economy, to the indemnity which he received for his father's property sold for the benefit of the nation in 1793, the little man realized, about 1827, the dream of his whole life. By giving four hundred thousand francs cash down and incurring obligations which condemned him to live for the next six years, as he said, on air, he was able to purchase, on the banks of the Loire, two leagues above Sancerre, the estate of Anzy, of which the magnificent château, built by Philibert Delorme, is the object of the just admiration of connoisseurs, and which for the last five hundred years had belonged to the house of Uxelles. He was finally counted among the great landed proprietors of the country. It is not certain that the joy caused by

the establishment of a majorat composed of the estate of Anzy, of the fief of La Baudraye and of the domain of La Hautoy, by virtue of letters patent dated December 1829, was adequate compensation for the chagrin of Dinah, who saw herself thereby reduced to a state of secret indigence until 1835. The prudent La Baudraye did not permit his wife to inhabit Anzy nor to make the least alterations in it until the payment of the last instalment. This bird's-eye view of the politics of the first Baron de la Baudraye explains the whole man. Those to whom the manias of the people of the provinces are familiar, will recognize in him *the passion for land,* a devouring, exclusive passion, a species of avarice displayed in the sunlight and which often leads to ruin through a deficiency of equilibrium between the interest on the mortgages and the productions of the land. Those who, from 1802 to 1827, had derided the little La Baudraye when they saw him trotting to Saint-Thibault and absorbed in his own affairs with the sharpness of a bourgeois living on the product of his vines, those who did not comprehend his contempt for the favor to which he owed his various appointments, abandoned as quickly as obtained, learned finally the answer to this enigma when this *formicaleo* leaped upon his prey, after having waited for the moment when the prodigality of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse had brought about the sale of this magnificent estate.

Madame Piédefer came to live with her daughter. The united fortunes of Monsieur de la Baudraye and

of his mother-in-law, who had contented herself with an annuity of twelve hundred francs while abandoning to her son-in-law the domain of La Hautoy, composed a visible revenue of about fifteen thousand francs. During the early days of her marriage Dinah had obtained some alterations which made La Baudraye a very agreeable dwelling. She converted an immense court into an English garden by demolishing store-rooms, presses and ignoble servants' halls. She contrived behind the manor house, a little construction with towers and gable-ends which was not wanting in character, a second garden with clumps of trees, flowers and lawns, and separated it from the vines by a wall which she concealed under climbing plants. Finally she introduced into the interior of the house as many comforts as the slenderness of the revenues permitted. That he might not allow himself to be devoured entirely by a young person as superior as Dinah appeared to be, Monsieur de la Baudraye had the address to keep silent on the subject of the collections which he had made at Paris. This profound secret maintained concerning his interests gave I-know-not-what of mystery to his character, and made him greater in his wife's eyes during the first years of her marriage, so much has silence of majesty! The alterations effected at La Baudraye inspired a so much more lively desire to see the young wife, that Dinah did not wish to show herself, nor to receive, before she had become completely at her ease, studied the country, and, above

all, the silent La Baudraye. When, on a spring morning in 1825, there was seen, on the Mail, the beautiful Madame de la Baudraye in a gown of blue velvet, her mother in a gown of black velvet, a great clamor arose in Sancerre. This toilet confirmed the superiority of this young woman, educated in the capital of Berri. There was great fear, in receiving this Berruyer phœnix, of not saying things that were witty enough, and naturally there was considerable restraint before Madame de la Baudraye, which produced a species of terror in the gentle female. When there was admired in the salon of La Baudraye a carpet resembling a cashmere, a Pompadour piece of furniture in gilded wood, brocatelle curtains at the windows, and on a round table, a conical Japanese vase filled with flowers, in the midst of some new books; when the beautiful Dinah was heard playing the piano from her open music-book without making the least ceremony about taking her seat, the idea that was entertained of her superiority assumed grand proportions. That she might never fall into habits of carelessness and of bad taste, Dinah had resolved to keep herself in touch with the fashions and the slightest modifications in luxury by maintaining an active correspondence with Anna Grossetête, her dearest friend at the Chamarolles institution. The only daughter of the receiver-general at Bourges, Anna, thanks to her fortune, had married the third son of the Comte de Fontaine. The women visitors at La Baudraye were therefore constantly offended by the superior

knowledge displayed by Dinah concerning the reigning fashions; and, do what they might, they always saw themselves distanced, or, as the habitués of the race-track say, "beaten by a head." If all these little things caused a malicious envy in the bosoms of the women of Sancerre, the conversation and the wit of Dinah engendered a veritable aversion. Desiring to maintain her intelligence always at the level of the Parisian intellectual movement, Madame de la Baudraye would not permit in any one either empty discourse, or belated gallantry, or meaningless phrases; she refused positively to listen to that clamor of small gossip, that back-stairs scandal, which furnishes the foundation of conversation in the provinces. Fond of discoursing of the most recent discoveries in science or in the arts, of works that had recently appeared at the theatres, in poetry, she appeared to be presenting ideas when she was merely making use of words then in fashion.

The Abbé Duret, the curé of Sancerre, a veteran of the old clergy of France, a man loving good company and to whom play was not displeasing, did not dare to give way to his inclinations in a place as liberal as Sancerre; he was therefore very well pleased at the arrival of Madame de la Baudraye, with whom he came to an admirable understanding. The sous-préfet, a Vicomte de Chargebœuf, was delighted to find in the salon of Madame de la Baudraye a species of oasis in which might be enjoyed a respite from provincial life. As to Monsieur de Clagny, the procureur du roi, his admiration for the

beautiful Dinah nailed him to Sancerre. This passionate magistrate refused all advancement, and devoted himself to loving piously this angel of grace and of beauty. He was a tall, dry man with a gallows countenance ornamented with two terrible eyes set in blackened orbits and surmounted by enormous eyebrows, and his eloquence, quite unlike his love, was biting.

Monsieur Gravier was a little man, round and fat, who, under the Empire, sang ballads admirably, and who was indebted to this talent for the eminent post of general paymaster in the army. Having a share in certain great interests in Spain with certain generals-in-chief then on the side of the opposition, he had been clever enough to profit by these parliamentary liaisons in approaching the minister, who, through consideration for his lost position, promised him the office of receiver in Sancerre, and ended by allowing him to purchase it. The light wit, the tone of the Empire, had become heavy in Monsieur Gravier, he did not comprehend, or would not comprehend, the enormous difference which separated the manners of the Restoration from those of the Empire ; but he considered himself much superior to Monsieur de Clagny, his appearance was in better taste, he followed the fashions, he showed himself in a yellow waistcoat, in gray pantaloons, in a tight-fitting little redingote ; he wore at his neck silk cravats *à la mode,* ornamented with diamond rings, whilst the procureur du roi never quitted his black coat, waistcoat and pantaloons, often threadbare.

These four personages were the first to grow enthusiastic over the education, the good taste, the cleverness of Dinah, and they proclaimed her a woman of the greatest intelligence. As to the women, they said among themselves :

" Madame de la Baudraye must indeed think us ridiculous."

This opinion, more or less just, had for result the keeping of the women away from La Baudraye. Accused and convicted of pedantry because she spoke correctly, Dinah was surnamed the Sappho of Saint-Satur. Everyone finally came to deriding with effrontery the pretended great qualities of her who thus became the enemy of the Sancerroises. In the end they went so far as to deny a superiority, purely relative, moreover, which called attention to ignorance and would not forgive it. When everyone is humpbacked, the fine figure becomes a monstrosity. Dinah was therefore regarded as monstrous and dangerous, and a waste solitude spread around her. Surprised at no longer seeing any women, notwithstanding all her advances, excepting at long intervals and during visits of a few minutes' duration, Dinah asked of Monsieur de Clagny the reason for this phenomenon.

" You are too superior a woman for the other women to love you," replied the procureur du roi.

Monsieur Gravier, whom the poor abandoned one interrogated, allowed himself to be most earnestly entreated before he replied to her :

" But, fair lady, you are not contented with being

charming, you have wit and intelligence, you are well educated, you keep yourself informed as to all that is written, you love poetry, you are a musician, and you have a charming gift of conversation;—women do not forgive so many superiorities!"

The men said to Monsieur de la Baudraye:

"You who have a superior wife, you are very fortunate."

And he finally came to saying:

"I who have a superior wife, I am very—etc."

Madame Piédefer, flattered through her daughter, permitted herself also to say things of this sort:

"My daughter, who is a very superior woman, wrote yesterday to Madame de Fontaine such and such things."

For anyone who knows the world, France, Paris, is it not true that a great many celebrities are established in this manner?

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At the end of two years, in the latter part of 1825, Dinah de la Baudraye was accused of wishing to receive only men; then her estrangement from the women was made a crime. Not one of her actions, even the most indifferent, but was criticised or misrepresented. After having made all the sacrifices that a well educated woman could make, and having had all the good manners on her side, Madame de la Baudraye committed the error of replying to a false friend who was deploring her isolation:

"I would rather have my porringer empty than with nothing in it."

This phrase produced terrible effects in Sancerre, and was, later, cruelly turned against the Sappho of Saint-Satur when, seeing her childless after five years of marriage, the little La Baudraye was derided. In order to understand this provincial jest, it will be necessary to recall to the memory of those who knew him, the Duc d'Hérouville, of whom it was said that he was the most courageous man in Europe because he dared to walk on his two legs,

and he was also accused of putting lead in his shoes so as not to be carried away by the wind. Monsieur de la Baudraye, a little man, yellow and almost diaphanous, would have been taken by the Duc d'Hérouville for the first gentleman of his chamber, if the grand equerry of France had been in some way the grand duke of Baden. Monsieur de la Baudraye, whose legs were so thin that he wore false calves for the sake of decency, whose thighs resembled the arms of a well-formed man, whose torso resembled sufficiently well the body of a cockchaffer would have been for the Duc d'Hérouville a perpetual flattery. In walking, the little wine-grower frequently turned his false calves round on the tibia, so little mystery did he make of them, and thanked those who notified him of this slight misadventure. He preserved the short breeches, the stockings of black silk and the white waistcoat until 1824. After his marriage, he wore blue pantaloons and boots with heels, which caused all Sancerre to say that he had made himself two inches taller so as to reach to his wife's chin. He was seen for ten years in the same little bottle-green redingote with great buttons of white metal, and a black cravat which set off his cold and poor-looking countenance, lit up by eyes of a bluish-gray, discerning and quiet, like the eyes of a cat. Gentle, like all those who follow a definite line of conduct, he appeared to make his wife very happy in having the air of never crossing her, he left the conversation to her, and contented himself with acting with the slowness, but with the tenacity, of an insect.

Adored for her unrivalled beauty, admired for her intelligence by the most *comme il faut* men in Sancerre, Dinah maintained this admiration by conversations for which, it was said later, she prepared herself in advance. In seeing herself listened to with delight, she became by degrees accustomed to listening to herself also, took pleasure in perorating, and ended by considering her friends as so many confidants of the drama whose mission was to give her the cue. She procured, moreover, a very fine collection of phrases and ideas, either from her readings or from assimilating the thoughts of her companions, and became thus a species of bird-organ, the music of which began whenever an accident of the conversation released the stop. Thirsty for knowledge—let us do her this justice—Dinah read everything, even to the works on medicine, statistics, science, jurisprudence; for she did not know in what manner to employ her mornings, after having inspected her flowers and given her orders to the gardener. Gifted with a good memory and with that talent which enables certain women always to select the right word, she could speak on any subject with the lucidity of a studied style. Thus from Cosne, from La Charité, from Nevers on the right bank, and from Léré, from Vailly, from Argent, from Blancafort, from Aubigny on the left bank, people came to be presented to Madame de la Baudraye, as in Switzerland they were presented to Madame de Staël. Those who heard only once the airs of this music-box, went away bedazzled, and

said of Dinah marvellous things which rendered the women jealous for ten leagues in every direction. There exists in the admiration which a person inspires, or in the playing of a certain part, I know not what mental intoxication, which does not permit any criticism to reach the idol. An atmosphere produced perhaps by a constant nervous dilation makes something like a nimbus through which the world is seen far below one. How else is to be explained the perpetual good faith which attends so many new representations of the same effects, and the continual unthankfulness for good advice which is seen, either in children, so terrible for their parents, or in husbands, so familiar with the innocent tricks of their wives? Monsieur de la Baudraye had the candor of a man who puts up an umbrella at the first drops of rain. When his wife brought up the question of the slave-trade, or the amelioration of the condition of the convicts, he took his little blue cap and went out without any noise, with the certainty that he could go to Saint-Thibault to inspect a delivery of puncheons and return an hour later to find the discussion fully developed. If he had nothing to do, he went to take a walk on the Mail, from which might be seen the admirable panorama of the valley of the Loire, and took a bath of air while his wife executed a sonata of words and duets of dialectics. Once accepted as a superior woman, Dinah wished to give visible gages of her love for the most remarkable creations of art, she adopted with vivacity all the ideas of the romantic school,—including in art, poetry

and painting, the printed page and the statue, the piece of furniture and the opera. Thus she became a mediævalist. She became interested also in curiosities said to date from the Renaissance, and made of her disciples so many devoted commissioners. She acquired, also, in the early days of her marriage, the furniture of Rouget, at Issoudun, at the time of the sale which took place in the beginning of 1824. She purchased some very beautiful things in Nivernais and in the Haute-Loire. At New Year's, or on her fête day, her friends never failed to offer her some rarities. These whims found favor in the eyes of Monsieur de la Baudraye, he had the appearance of sacrificing a few écus to gratify his wife, but, in reality, the man of estates was thinking of his château d'Anzy. These *antiquities* cost them much less than modern furniture. At the end of five or six years, the antechamber, the dining-room, the two salons and the boudoir which Dinah had arranged on the ground floor of La Baudraye, every place, even to the casing of the stairway, was gorged with chefs-d'œuvre drawn from the four surrounding departments. These surroundings, considered very strange in the provinces, were in harmony with Dinah. These marvels, on the point of coming into fashion again, struck the imagination of the guests who were presented, they had expected strange conceptions and they found their expectations surpassed when they saw across a world of flowers, these catacombs of old lumber arranged as in the establishment of the late Du Sommerard, that *Old*

Mortality of furniture! These treasure-troves were, moreover, so many springs which, when occasion arrived, would spring dissertations upon Jean Goujon, on Michael Columb, on Germain Pilon, on Boulle, on Van Huysium, on Boucher, that great Berrichon painter; on Clodion, the carver in wood, on the Venetian veneerings, on Brustolone, Italian tenor, the Michael Angelo of evergreen oak; on the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, on the enamels of Bernard Palissy, on those of Petitot, on the engravings of Albert Dürer—which she pronounced *Dur*—on illuminated vellums, on florid, flamboyant, ornamented and pure Gothic, to confound the old men and inspire the young ones.

Animated with the desire to vivify Sancerre, Madame de la Baudraye endeavored to form in it a society to be called literary. The president of the tribunal, Monsieur Boirouge, who at that time found himself with a house with a garden, belonging to the Popinot-Chandier inheritance, on his hands, favored the creation of this society. This shrewd magistrate came to arrange the statutes with Madame de la Baudraye, he wished to be one of the founders, and he leased his house for fifteen years to the literary society. By the second year they were playing dominoes, billiards, bouillotte, drinking sweetened hot wine, punch and liquors. Several fine little suppers were given there, and masked balls were held there during the Carnival. As to literature, they read the journals there, they talked politics there and dis-

cussed business affairs. Monsieur de la Baudraye went there assiduously for his wife's sake, he said jestingly.

These results afflicted this superior woman, who despaired of Sancerre, and concentrated thereafter in her salon all the wit of the province. Nevertheless, notwithstanding all the good will of Messieurs Chargebœuf, Gravier, de Clagny, of the Abbé Duret, of the first and second deputies, of a young physician, of a young assistant justice, blind admirers of Dinah, there were moments when, weary of warfare, excursions were permitted into the domain of agreeable futilities which compose the common stock of the conversations of the world. Monsieur Gravier called this *passing from the grave to the gay*. The whist of the Abbé Duret made a useful diversion from what were practically the monologues of the goddess. The three rivals, fatigued with keeping their minds stretched in *discussions of the highest order,* for it was thus they characterized their conversations, but not daring to betray the least satiety, would sometimes turn with a sly air to the old priest.

"Monsieur le curé is dying to get up his little game," they would say.

The intelligent curé lent himself with sufficient readiness to the hypocrisy of his confederates, he resisted, he exclaimed:

"We should lose too much by not listening to our charming, inspired hostess!"

And he would incite the generosity of Dinah, who would finally take pity on her dear curé. This

brazen manœuvre, first invented by the sous-préfet, was practised with so much astuteness that Dinah never suspected the escape of her convicts into the prison court of the card table ; she had then only the young deputy or the doctor to bedevil. A young landed proprietor, the dandy of Sancerre, lost Dinah's favor by some imprudent demonstrations. After having solicited the honor of being admitted into this sacred guest-chamber, flattering himself that he would carry away from it its flower, despite the constitutional authorities who there cultivated it, he had the misfortune to yawn during an explanation which Dinah deigned to give him—for the fourth time, it is true—of the philosophy of Kant. Monsieur de la Thaumassière, the grandson of the historian of Berri, was regarded as a man completely destitute of intelligence and soul.

The three official lovers submitted to these exorbitant expenditures of intelligence and attentiveness in the hope of the sweetest of triumphs, at the moment when Dinah would become human, for not one of them had the audacity to think that she would lose her conjugal innocence before having lost her illusions. In 1826, the epoch at which Dinah saw herself surrounded by homage, she attained her twentieth year, and the Abbé Duret maintained in her a species of Catholic ardor ; her adorers therefore contented themselves with overwhelming her with little thoughtfulnesses, they surrounded her with services, with attentions, happy to be taken for the chevaliers of honor of this queen by the presented

guests who came to pass one or two evenings at La Baudraye.

"Madame de la Baudraye is a fruit which must be left to ripen," such was the opinion of Monsieur Gravier, who was waiting.

As for the magistrate, he wrote letters of four pages in length to which Dinah replied with quieting words while taking a turn after dinner around her lawn, leaning on the arm of her adorer. Guarded by these three passions, Madame de la Baudraye, accompanied, moreover, by her devout mother, escaped all the misfortunes of slander. It was so evident in Sancerre that not one of these three men would leave one of their number alone with Madame de la Baudraye, that their jealousy gave the affair a comic aspect. To go from the Porte César to Saint-Thibault, there is a much shorter road than that of the Grands-Remparts, and which in mountainous countries is called *une coursière,* but which is called in Sancerre *le Casse-cou*—Break-neck. This name indicates with sufficient clearness a path traced on the steepest slope of the mountain, encumbered with stones and embanked by the slopes of the vineyards. By taking the Casse-cou the route is shortened from Sancerre to La Baudraye. The women, jealous of the Sappho of Saint-Satur, would take their promenades on the Mail to look at this Longchamp of the authorities, occasionally they would stop and engage in conversation, sometimes the sous-préfet, sometimes the procureur du roi, who would then betray symptoms of a visible impatience

or of a very rude inattention. As from the Mail the towers of La Baudraye could be seen, more than one young man went there to contemplate the dwelling of Dinah, envying the privilege of the ten or twelve habitués who passed the evenings in the presence of the queen of the Sancerrois. Monsieur de la Baudraye had early remarked the ascendancy which his quality as husband gave him over his wife's gallants, and he made use of them with the most entire candor, he obtained reductions of taxes, and he gained two petty lawsuits. In all his litigation, he made the weight of the authority of the procureur du roi felt in such a manner as no longer to see himself opposed, and he was exacting and disputatious in business affairs, like all dwarfs, but always with mildness.

Nevertheless, the more brilliant the innocence of Madame de la Baudraye appeared, the more impossible her situation became in the inquisitive eyes of the women. Frequently the La Baudraye household was discussed through entire evenings in the salons of Madame la Présidente Boirouge by the ladies of a certain age,—among themselves, be it understood. All of them had a presentiment of one of those mysteries, the secret of which interests so keenly women who have had experience in life. There was taking place at La Baudraye, in fact, one of those long and monotonous conjugal tragedies which would remain eternally unknown if the remorseless scalpel of the nineteenth century, urged by the necessity of finding something new, did not search the most obscure corners of the heart, or, if

you like, those which the modesty of preceding centuries had respected. And this domestic drama explains sufficiently well the virtue of Dinah during the first years of her marriage.

A young girl whose success at the Chamarolles institute had had its moving spring in pride, whose first calculation had been recompensed with a first victory, was not likely to arrest her steps in so promising a road. However puny Monsieur de la Baudraye may have appeared, he was, for Mademoiselle Dinah Piédefer, a *parti* truly unhoped for. What could be the secret intention of this wine-grower in marrying, at forty-four years of age, a young girl of seventeen, and what could his wife gain from him? Such was the first text of Dinah's meditations. The little man perpetually deceived his wife's observation. Thus, at the very first, he allowed to be taken the four precious acres wasted in embellishment around La Baudraye, and he gave almost generously the seven or eight thousand francs required for the interior arrangements directed by Dinah, who was enabled to purchase at Issoudun the Rouget furniture and undertake in her own house the system of her decorations mediæval, Louis XIV., and Pompadour. The young wife thus had difficulty in believing that Monsieur de la Baudraye was avaricious, as she was told, or she could think that she had acquired a little ascendancy over him. This error lasted for eighteen months. After his second journey to Paris, Dinah recognized in him the polar cold of the avaricious of the provinces in everything relating to money. At

the first request for funds, she played the most graceful of those comedies the secret of which has descended from Eve; but the little man explained clearly to his wife that he would give her two hundred francs a month for her personal expenses, that he would allow twelve hundred francs of annuity to Madame Piédefer for the domain of La Hautoy, that the thousand écus of the dot would thus be exceeded by a sum of two hundred francs a year.

"I am not speaking to you of our household expenses," he said in concluding, "I will allow you to offer cakes and tea to your friends in the evenings, for it is necessary that you should amuse yourself; but, I who did not expend fifteen hundred francs a year before my marriage, I now expend six thousand francs, including taxes and repairs, that is a little too much, considering the nature of our property. A wine-grower is never sure of his expenses,—the tillage, the taxes, the casks; whilst the receipts depend upon a bit of sunshine or a frost. The small proprietors, such as we are, whose revenues are far from certain, should figure upon their minimum, for they have no means of repairing an extra expense or a loss. What would become of us if a wine-merchant should fail? Thus for me, the bills receivable are no more than cabbage leaves. To live as we are living, we should then have always at least a year's income ahead of us, and count only upon two-thirds of our receipts."

It is sufficient that there should be any resistance whatever for a woman to desire to overcome it, and

Dinah threw herself against a soul of bronze, cottoned with the softest manners. She endeavored to inspire fear and jealousy in this little man, but she found him encamped in the most insolent tranquillity. He left Dinah to go to Paris with the certainty which Medoro would have had of the faithfulness of Angelica. When she became cold and disdainful in order to touch this abortion to the quick by the scorn which the courtesans employ against their protectors and which acts upon them with the precision of the screw of a press, Monsieur de la Baudraye turned upon his wife eyes fixed like those of a cat which, in the presence of domestic trouble, waits for the threat of a blow before leaving her place. The sort of inexplicable inquietude which revealed itself through this silent indifference almost terrified this young wife of twenty ; she could not comprehend at all, at first, the tranquil egotism of this man, comparable to a cracked pot, who, in order to live, had regulated the movements of his existence with the fatal precision which the clockmakers give to their pendulums. Thus the little man constantly escaped from his wife ; she combated him constantly with blows ten feet above his head. It is more easy to comprehend than to depict the transports of rage into which Dinah fell when she saw herself condemned to remain forever in La Baudraye and Sancerre, she who had dreamed of managing the fortune and of directing the career of this dwarf whom she, a giantess, had at first obeyed for the sake of commanding. In the hope of making her

début some day on the great theatre of Paris, she accepted the commonplace incense of her chevaliers of honor, she wished to make the name of Monsieur de la Baudraye issue from the electoral urn, for she believed him to have ambition when she saw him return thrice from Paris after having mounted each time a round in the social ladder. But when she interrogated the heart of this man, she struck against marble!—The ex-receiver, the ex-referendary, the maître des requêtes, the officer of the Legion of Honor, the commissioner royal, was a mole occupied in tracing his subterranean mine around a vineyard! What elegies were then poured into the heart of the procureur du roi, of the sous-préfet, and even of Monsieur Gravier, who, all of them, became even more attached to this sublime victim; for she carefully avoided—as do all women, for that matter—speaking of her calculations, and, like all other women also, when she saw herself shut out from all speculation, she reviled speculation. Dinah, agitated by these inward tempests, reached, in a state of indecision, the year 1827, when, near the end of the autumn, came suddenly the news of the acquisition of the estate of Anzy by the Baron de la Baudraye. This little old fellow then experienced an emotion of proud joy which brought about, for a few months, a change in his wife's ideas; she believed in something, I know not what, great in him when she saw him endeavoring to obtain the erection of a majorat. In his triumph the little baron exclaimed:

"Dinah, you will be a countess some day."

There was then brought about between this couple those patchings-up which do not hold, and which are likely to weary as much as they humiliate a wife of whom the apparent superiorities are false and of whom the hidden superiorities are real. This grotesque contradiction is more frequent than is thought. Dinah, who made herself ridiculous by the caprices of her mind, was great in the qualities of her soul; but circumstances did not bring these rare forces into light, whilst the provincial life debased from day to day the small change of her mind. Through a contrary phenomenon, Monsieur de la Baudraye, without strength, without soul and without wit, would some day appear as a great character by following quietly a line of conduct from which his debility did not permit him to deviate.

This was, in this existence, a preliminary phase which lasted for six years, and during which Dinah became, alas! a woman of the provinces. At Paris, there exist several species of women,—there is the duchess and the banker's wife, the wife of the ambassador and the wife of the consul, the wife of the minister who is a minister and the wife of him who is so no longer; there is the woman *comme il faut* of the right bank and she of the left bank of the Seine; but in the provinces, there is only one woman, and this poor woman is the woman of the provinces. This observation designates one of the very great defects of our modern society. Observe this well! France in the nineteenth century is divided into two great zones,—Paris and the provinces; the provinces

jealous of Paris, Paris thinking of the provinces only to draw money from them. Formerly, Paris was the first city of the provinces, the court having the first place in the city; to-day, Paris is the whole court, the provinces the whole city. However great, however beautiful, however capable may be at her début a young girl born in any department whatever, if, like Dinah Piédefer, she marries in the provinces and remains there, she presently becomes a woman of the provinces. Despite all her fixed projects, the commonplaces, the mediocrity of the ideas, the carelessness in dress, the horticulture of vulgarities, take possession of the sublime being hidden in this new soul, and everything is said,—the beautiful plant withers. How could it be otherwise? From their earliest years, the young girls of the provinces see only provincials around them, they can imagine nothing better, they have only mediocrities to choose from; the provincial fathers marry their daughters only to provincial youths; it occurs to no one to cross the races, the spiritual nature necessarily declines; thus in many cities, intelligence has become as rare as the blood there is ugly. Man becomes stunted in both qualities, for the sinister idea of the suitability of fortunes presides over all the matrimonial conventions. The talented ones, the artists, the superior men, all the cocks with brilliant plumage, fly off to Paris. Inferior as a woman, the provincial wife is still more inferior through her husband. Live happily then if you can with these two crushing reflections! But the conjugal inferiority and the

radical inferiority of the provincial wife are aggravated by a third and terrible inferiority which contributes to render this figure dry and sombre, to contract it, to lessen it, to age it fatally. One of the most agreeable flatteries which the women take to themselves, is it not the certainty of counting for something in the life of a superior man chosen by them after due examination, as if to take their revenge for the marriage in which their tastes are very little consulted? Now, in the provinces, if there is no superiority among the husbands, there exists still less among the bachelors. Thus when the woman of the provinces commits her little fault, she is always enamored of some pretended fine man, or some indigenous dandy, of some youth who wears gloves, who is said to know how to ride horseback; but, in the bottom of her heart, she knows that her vows are addressed to a commonplace, more or less well dressed. Dinah was preserved from this danger by the idea which had been given her of her superiority. Had she not been, during the first days of her marriage, as well guarded as she was by her mother, whose presence was wearisome to her only at the moments in which she had an interest in sending her away, she would have been guarded by her pride and by the height at which she placed her destinies. Sufficiently flattered to see herself surrounded by admirers, she saw no lover among them. Not one man realized the poetic ideal which she had already sketched out in concert with Anna Grossetête. When, vanquished by the in-

voluntary temptations which the homages awakened in her, she said to herself: "Which should I choose, if it were absolutely necessary to give one's self?" she felt a preference for Monsieur de Chargebœuf, a gentleman of a good family, whose person and whose manners pleased her, but whose calculating mind, whose egotism, whose ambition narrowed to a prefecture and a good marriage, revolted her. At the first word from his family, which feared to see him throw away his life by a low intrigue, the viscount had already abandoned without remorse an adored woman in his first sous-préfecture. On the contrary, the person of Monsieur de Clagny, the only one whose mind was in real communication with Dinah's, whose ambition had love for its principle and who knew how to love, displeased her very greatly. When she found herself condemned to remain six years longer in La Baudraye, she was going to accept the attentions of Monsieur le Vicomte de Chargebœuf; but he was appointed prefect and left the department. To the great contentment of the procureur du roi, the new sous-préfet was a married man whose wife became intimate with Dinah. Monsieur de Clagny had no longer any other rivalry to combat than that of Monsieur Gravier. Now Monsieur Gravier was the type of that man of forty whom the women make use of and ridicule, whose hopes are knowingly and remorselessly fostered by them just as one takes care of a beast of burden. During six years, among all the men who were presented to her, from twenty leagues around, there

was not found one at the sight of whom Dinah experienced that commotion which is caused by beauty, by the belief in happiness, by the contact with a superior soul, or by the presentiment of any love whatever, even an unhappy one.

Not one of the finer faculties of Dinah was, then, able to develop, she concealed the wounds given her pride, constantly offended by her husband, who promenaded himself so complacently and as a supernumerary across the stage of her life. Obliged to bury the treasures of her love, she gave herself only outwardly to her society. There were moments when she shook herself, when she wished to take some virile resolution ; but she was held in leash by the question of money. Thus, slowly and despite her ambitious protestations, despite the elegiac recriminations of her spirit, she underwent the provincial transformations which have just been described. Every day carried away a shred of her early resolutions. She had written out for herself a programme of toilet cares which, by degrees, she abandoned. If, at first, she followed the fashions, if she kept herself informed as to the little inventions of luxury, she was obliged to restrict her purchases to the figure of her allowance. Instead of four hats, six bonnets and six dresses, she contented herself with one dress for each season. She was thought to be so pretty in a certain hat, that she wore that hat the following year. It was this way with everything. Frequently the artist sacrificed the requirements of her toilet to the desire to

have a Gothic piece of furniture. In the course of the seventh year, she came to the point of finding it convenient to have her morning gowns made under her eyes by the most skilful seamstress of the department, and her mother, her husband, her friends, thought her charming in these economical toilets in which, according to her custom, her good taste was displayed. Her ideas were copied!— As she had before her eyes no standard of comparison, Dinah fell into the trap that is set for all women in the provinces. If a Parisienne has not her hips sufficiently well developed, her inventive spirit and the desire to please will enable her to find some heroic remedy; if she has some fault, some grain of ugliness, any blemish whatever, she is capable of making an attraction of it,—that is often seen; but the woman of the provinces, never! If her figure is too short, if her embonpoint is badly placed, well, she takes things as they are, and her adorers, under penalty of not loving her, must accept her as she is, whilst the Parisienne wishes always to be taken for that which she is not. Hence those grotesque figures, those shameless meagrenesses, those ridiculous fulnesses, those ungracious lines, presented in all candor, to which a whole city is accustomed, and which cause surprise when a woman of the provinces appears in Paris, or before the Parisians. Dinah, whose figure was slender, made the most of it to an exaggerated degree and did not in the least perceive the moment when she became ridiculous, when, ennui having made her still thinner, she ap-

peared to be a clothed skeleton; her friends, seeing her every day, did not notice the insensible change in her personal appearance. This phenomenon is one of the natural results of life in the provinces. Notwithstanding marriage, a young girl still remains beautiful for some time, the town is proud of her; but each one sees her every day, and when things are seen every day, the observation becomes dulled. If, like Madame de la Baudraye, she loses a little of her brilliancy, it is scarcely perceived. It is even better, a little redness, that is understood, that excites interest. A little negligence is thought admirable. Moreover, the physiognomy is so well studied, so well understood, that the slight alterations are scarcely remarked, and perhaps in the end they come to be regarded as slight additions to beauty. When Dinah did not renew her toilet with the seasons, she appeared to have made a concession to the philosophy of the country. It is the same way with conversation, with the fashions of language and of ideas, as with feeling,—the mind grows rusty as well as the body, if it cannot renew itself in the Parisian world; but that in which provincial life most manifests itself is in the gesture, the walk, the movements, which lose that agility which Paris incessantly communicates. The woman of the provinces is accustomed to walk, to move about in a sphere without accidents, without transitions; she has nothing to avoid, she goes along like the recruits in Paris, not thinking that there may be any obstacles; for there are none for her in her province,

where she is known, where she is always in her place and where everybody makes way for her. The woman then loses the charm of the unforeseen. Finally, have you remarked the singular phenomenon of the reaction which is produced upon men by this life in common? Through the inevitable tendency of a simian imitation, persons grow to model themselves upon each other. Each one takes on, without perceiving it, the gestures, the manner of speaking, the attitudes, the airs, the very countenance of the other. In the course of six years, Dinah took the tone of her society. In adopting the ideas of Monsieur de Clagny, she adopted the sound of his voice; she imitated, without perceiving it, the masculine manners in seeing none but men;—she thought she could guarantee herself against all their ridicule by deriding them; but, as it happens to certain jesters, there remained some traces of the thing derided, in her own nature. A Parisienne has before her too many examples of good taste for the contrary phenomenon not to take place. Thus, the women of Paris wait for the hour and the moment to be justly appreciated; whilst Madame de la Baudraye, accustomed to seeing herself on the stage, contracted something undefinable of theatrical and overbearing, the air of a *prima donna* entering on the scene, which the mocking smiles would very soon have reformed in Paris. When she had acquired her full measure of absurdity, and when, deceived by her enchanted adorers, she thought she had acquired new graces, she experienced a moment

of terrible awakening which was like an avalanche falling from a mountain. Dinah was overwhelmed one day by a frightful comparison. In 1828, after the departure of Monsieur de Chargebœuf, she was agitated by the anticipation of a small happiness—she was going to see again the Baronne de Fontaine. On the death of his father, Anna's husband, now become director-general in the ministry of finance, took advantage of a leave of absence to journey with his wife to Italy, during the period of his mourning. Anna wished to stop for a day at Sancerre, to visit the friend of her childhood. This meeting had something indescribably unfortunate about it. Anna, far less beautiful at the Chamarolles institute than Dinah, as Baronne de Fontaine appeared to be a thousand times more beautiful than the Baronne de la Baudraye, notwithstanding her fatigue and her travelling costume. Anna descended from a charming travelling coupé, loaded with the bandboxes of the Parisienne; she had with her a femme de chambre whose elegance dismayed Dinah. Every one of the differences which distinguish the Parisienne from the woman of the provinces suddenly displayed itself to the intelligent eyes of Dinah, she saw herself then such as she appeared to her friend, who, in fact, found her unrecognizable. Anna expended six thousand francs a year on herself, the sum total of the household expenses of Monsieur de la Baudraye. In the space of twenty-four hours, the two friends exchanged a great many confidences; and the Parisienne, finding herself superior to the

phœnix of the Chamarolles institute, displayed for her provincial friend those kindnesses, those attentions, in explaining to her certain things, which were for Dinah so many more wounds; for the provincial recognized that the superiorities of the Parisienne were all on the surface, whilst her own were forever buried.

After Anna's departure, Madame de la Baudraye, then twenty-two years of age, fell into a boundless despair.

"What is it that troubles you?" said Monsieur de Clagny to her, seeing her so cast down.

"Anna," she replied, "learned to live while I was learning to suffer—"

There was taking place, in fact, in the household of Madame de la Baudraye, a tragi-comedy that was in harmony with her struggles with fortune, with her successive transformations, of which Monsieur de Clagny alone, after the Abbé Duret, knew anything, when Dinah, through lack of occupation, through vanity perhaps, revealed to him the secret of her anonymous glory.

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Although the alliance of verse and of prose is truly monstrous in French literature, there are, nevertheless, exceptions to this rule. This history will offer, then, one of those two violations which, in these studies, will be committed against the traditions of fiction; for, to obtain some knowledge of the inward struggles which might excuse Dinah without absolving her, it will be necessary to analyze a poem, the fruit of her profound despair.

Arrived at the end of her patience and of her resignation by the departure of the Vicomte de Chargebœuf, Dinah followed the advice of the good Abbé Duret, who counselled her to convert her evil thoughts into poetry; which may perhaps explain certain poets.

"It will happen to you as it does to those who rhyme in epitaphs or elegies on those whom they have lost;—sorrow will be calmed in the heart in proportion as the Alexandrines boil in the head."

This strange poem stirred up a revolution in the departments of the Allier, of the Nièvre and of the Cher, happy to possess a poet capable of contending with the Parisian celebrities. PAQUITA LA

SÉVILLANE, by JAN DIAZ, was published in the *Écho du Morvan,* a species of review which contended for eighteen months against the provincial indifference. Some intelligent spirits in Nevers pretended that Jan Diaz had wished to ridicule the young school that was then producing its eccentric poetry, energetic and full of figures, in which great effects were obtained by outraging the muse under the pretext of fantasies German, English and Romanic.

The poem commenced with this song :

If you but knew the land of Spain,
Its balmy field and scented plain,
Its pleasant nights and glowing days,
Of love, of sky, of fatherland,
Oh ! mournful Neustrian maiden band
You ne'er again would speak in praise.

The men have other natures there
Than those who breathe our chilly air !
Ah ! there, from eve till daylight's dawn,
With rhythmic dance resounds the lawn
To Andalusia's ardent fair,
In satin slippers, gathered there.

Yourselves the first with shame to burn
At your own dances ' uncouth turn,
Your carnival cold, a tawdry fête
But gives your cheeks a bluish shade,
The dancers, sunk in mud, parade
With horse-hide shod, at clumsy gait.

'Twas in a gloomy den, to girls attentive, pale,
Paquita did these songs recite ;
In that Rouen so black, whose countless steeples frail

With jagged teeth the tempests bite;
In that Rouen so vile, uproarious, mad. . .
. . . . . .

In a magnificent description of Rouen, which Dinah had never seen, executed with that fictitious brutality which dictated later so much Juvenal-like poetry, life in the manufacturing cities was contrasted with the careless life of Spain, the love of the heavens and of human beauties with the employment of machinery, in short, poetry with mercantile speculation. And Jan Diaz explained the horror of Paquita for Normandy by saying:

Beneath Seville's blue sky, Paquita saw the day,
Where evening's breezes scent the air;
At thirteen years, the city owned her queenly sway,
And all desired her love to share.
For her three toreadors in fatal combat fell;
The victor's prize for which they fought,
A kiss from her fair lips, a single kiss, mark well,
That all Seville so eager sought.
. . . . . .

The sketch of the portrait of this young Spanish girl has served since for so many courtesans in so many pretended poems, that it would be wearisome to reproduce here the hundred verses of which it was composed. But, to judge of the hardihood which Dinah had permitted herself, it will be sufficient to give the conclusion. According to the ardent Madame de la Baudraye, Paquita was so especially created for love that she could with difficulty find cavaliers worthy of her; for,

. . . . . in her voluptuous mood,
'Twere plain that all must find defeat,
When at love's festal board, afire with passion lewd,
She had but just assumed her seat.
. . . . . .

But spite of all, her joyous Seville home she spurned
Its orange groves and woodlands fair,
A Norman soldier's love her ardent soul returned,
He led her off his hearth to share.

Nor mourned she Andalusia, of its queen bereft;
Her soldier all her life engrossed.
. . . . . .

One day to Russia he was called, his love he left,
And joined the mighty Emperor's host.

Nothing could be more delicate than the painting of the farewells of the fair Spaniard and of the Norman captain of artillery, who, in all the delirium of a passion rendered with a depth of feeling worthy of Byron, exacted from Paquita a promise of absolute faithfulness, in the cathedral of Rouen, at the altar of the Virgin,

Though virgin, she is woman too, and ne'er forgives
The treachery of love forsworn.

A large portion of the poem was consecrated to the painting of the sufferings of Paquita, alone in Rouen, waiting for the end of the campaign; she writhed at the bars of her window on seeing the joyous couples pass by, she confined her love in her heart with an energy which devoured her, she lived on narcotics, she expended herself in visions!

Though death had hovered near, she ne'er forgot her vows,
Then when her warrior sought her side,
Although a year had sped, he found his lovely spouse
Still worthy of his love and pride.
But Russia's cold had blanched his cheeks, and chilled his bones,
E'en to the very marrow's core,
And sadly answered he his lover's tender tones.

. . . . . .

The whole poem had been conceived for this situation, developed with an energy, an audacity, which justified the Abbé Duret a little too strongly. Paquita, in recognizing the limits within which love ends, did not throw herself, like Héloïse and Juliette, into the infinite, into the ideal; no, she went, which is perhaps atrociously natural, into the path of vice, but without any grandeur, for lack of material, for it is difficult to find in Rouen those who are sufficiently passionate to place a Paquita amid surroundings of luxury and elegance. This frightful realism, relieved by a sombre poetry, had dictated some of those pages which modern poetry abuses, and which are somewhat too much like those flayed, anatomical figures which the artists call *ecorches*. By a return touched with philosophy, the poetess, after having depicted the infamous dwelling in which the Andalusian ended her days, returned to the song of the opening:

But years have bowed Paquita, she is wrinkled now,
And yet 'twas she who sang these songs:

If you but knew the land of Spain,
Its balmy field and scented plain,—etc

The sombre energy which characterized this poem of about six hundred verses, and which, if it be permitted to borrow this word from the painters, made a strong setting-off for two *seguidillas,* like those which commenced and ended the work, this masculine expression of an inexpressible pain, terrified the woman whom three departments admired under the black coat of the anonymous writer. Even while tasting the intoxicating delights of success, Dinah feared the malice of the provinces, in which more than one woman, in case of any indiscretion, would be quick to perceive some relations between the author and Paquita. Then she reflected; she shivered with shame at the thought of having demonstrated some of her troubles.

"Do nothing more," said the Abbé Duret to her, "you would be no longer a woman. You would be a poet."

Jan Diaz was sought for at Moulins, at Nevers, at Bourges; but Dinah was undiscoverable. That she might not be thought ill of, in case some fatal accident should reveal her name, she wrote a charming poem, in two parts, on *The Oak of the Mass,* a Nivernais tradition to this effect. One day the people of Nevers and those of Saint-Saulge, at war with each other, set off in the dawn to deliver a mortal battle against each other and encountered in the forest of Faye. Between the two parties there stood under an oak a priest, whose attitude, in the light of the rising sun, had something so striking in it that the opposing hosts, listening to his orders,

heard the mass which was celebrated under the oak; and, at the voice of the Gospel, they became reconciled to each other. There is still shown some kind of an oak in the forest of Faye. This poem, infinitely superior to *Paquita la Sévillane,* had far less success. Since this double essay, Madame de la Baudraye, knowing herself a poet, had a sudden lighting around the forehead, in the eyes, which made her more beautiful than formerly. She turned her eyes toward Paris, she aspired after glory and fell back into her hole of La Baudraye, into her daily quibbling with her husband, into her own circle, where the characters, the purposes, the discourses, were too familiar not to become wearisome in the end. If she were able to find in her literary works a distraction from her misfortunes; if poetry filled the emptiness of her life with resounding echoes, if it occupied all her powers, literature made her conceive a hatred for the gray and heavy atmosphere of the provinces.

When, after the revolution of 1830, the glory of George Sand radiated throughout Berri, many cities envied La Châtre the privilege of having given birth to a rival to Madame de Staël, to Camille Maupin, and were sufficiently disposed to honor the smallest feminine talents. Thus there were to be seen at that time a good many tenth muses in France, young girls or young wives turned aside from a peaceful life by a semblance of glory! Strange doctrines were then published on the rôle which woman should fill in society. Without perverting the good sense

which lies at the bottom of French intelligence, women were then given permission to express ideas, to profess sentiments which they would not have avowed a few years previously. Monsieur de Clagny profited by this moment of license to bring together in a little 18mo volume printed by Desrosiers, at Moulins, the works of Jan Diaz. He composed upon this young writer, so early snatched away from letters, a memoir very curious and intelligent for those who knew the answer to the enigma, but which had not then in literature the merit of novelty. These pleasantries, excellent while the incognito is preserved, become somewhat cold when the author is revealed later. But, in this relation, the notice of Jan Diaz, son of a Spanish prisoner, and born about 1807, at Bourges, was not without its chances of deceiving some day the makers of *Universal Biographies*. Nothing was lacking,—neither the names of the professors of the college at Bourges, nor those of the condisciples of the deceased poet, such as Lousteau, Bianchon and other celebrated Berruyers who were considered to have known him as a melancholy dreamer, betraying a precocious disposition for poetry. An elegy entitled *Tristesse,* written at college, the two poems of *Paquita la Sévillane* and the *Chêne de la Messe,* three sonnets, a description of the cathedral of Bourges and of the hôtel of Jacques Cœur, finally a novel called *Carola*, given as a work during which he had been surprised by death, formed the literary baggage of the defunct, whose last moments, filled

with poverty and despair, were calculated to wring the hearts of all sensitive beings of the Nièvre, of the Bourbonnais, of the Cher and of the Morvan, where he had expired, near Château-Chinon, unknown of all, even of her whom he loved!—Of this little yellow volume, two hundred copies were printed, of which a hundred and fifty were sold, about fifty for each department. This average of sensitive and poetic souls in those departments of France is such as to refresh the enthusiasm of the authors on the *furia Francese*, which in our days, is exercised much more upon interests than upon books. Monsieur de Clagny having been thus liberal, for it was he who signed the memoir, Dinah preserved seven or eight copies wrapped in foreign journals which had noticed this publication. Twenty copies sent to the journals of Paris were lost in the gulf of the publishing offices. Nathan, duped, as well as several Berrichons, wrote upon this great man an article in which he found in him all the qualities which are usually attributed to those who are buried. Lousteau, made prudent by his college comrades, who could remember no Jan Diaz, waited for news from Sancerre, and heard that Jan Diaz was the pseudonym of a woman. In the arrondissement of Sancerre, there was a great enthusiasm for Madame de la Baudraye, in whom the future rival of George Sand was seen. From Sancerre to Bourges, the poem was lauded, was exalted, though at another time it would certainly have been denounced. The public of the provinces, like all

French publics perhaps, has but little fondness for the passion of the King of the French, the safe middle ground;—it elevates you to the skies or plunges you in the mire.

At this period, the good old Abbé Duret, the counsellor of Madame de la Baudraye, was dead; if he had been living, he could certainly have prevented her from giving herself to publicity. But three years of labor and of living unknown weighed upon Dinah's heart, and she substituted the uproar of glory for all her deceived ambitions. Poetry and the dreams of fame, which, since her meeting with Anna Grossetête had lulled her griefs, no longer sufficed, after 1830, for the activity of this sick heart. The Abbé Duret, who spoke of the world when the voice of religion was powerless, the Abbé Duret, who comprehended Dinah, who painted for her a beautiful future in saying to her that God would recompense all sufferings nobly supported, this kindly old man could no longer interpose between a fault to be committed and his beautiful penitent, whom he called his daughter. This wise and aged priest had more than once endeavored to enlighten Dinah upon the character of Monsieur de la Baudraye, saying to her that this man was capable of hating; but women are not disposed to recognize a strength in feeble beings, and hatred is a too constant action not to be a living force. When she found her husband profoundly indifferent in love, Dinah refused him the faculty of hating.

"Do not confuse hatred and vengeance," said the

abbé to her, "they are two very different sentiments;—one is that of the little souls, the other is the effect of a law which the great souls obey. God avenges Himself, and does not hate. Hatred is the vice of narrow souls, they feed it with all their littlenesses, they make of it the pretext of their low tyrannies. Therefore carefully avoid wounding Monsieur de la Baudraye; he would forgive you a fault, for he would find a profit in it, but he would be softly implacable if you should touch him at the spot where Monsieur Milaud de Nevers so cruelly hit him, and life would no longer be possible for you."

Now, at the moment when the Nivernais, the Sancerrois, the Morvans, the Berrichons, were all filled with pride because of Madame de la Baudraye, and were celebrating her under the name of Jan Diaz, the little La Baudraye received a mortal stroke from this glory. He alone knew the secrets of the poem of *Paquita la Sévillane*. When this terrible work was discussed, every one said of Dinah: "Poor woman! poor woman!" The women were happy to be able to pity her who had so much oppressed them, and never had Dinah appeared greater in the eyes of the country. The little old man, now more yellow, more wrinkled, more debilitated than ever, made no sign; but Dinah occasionally surprised his eyes fixed upon her with a venomous chill which contradicted his redoubled politeness and softness with her. She ended by discovering what she thought was a simple household disagreement; but, in coming to

an explanation with the insect, as Monsieur Gravier called him, she was conscious of the chill, the hardness, the impassibility of steel ;—she let herself be carried away, she reproached him for her life of the past eleven years ; she made—with the intention of making it—what the women call a scene ; but the little La Baudraye remained in his armchair, his eyes closed, and listened without losing his calmness. And the dwarf had, as always, the best of his wife. Dinah comprehended that she had been in the wrong to write ;—she promised herself never to make another verse, and she kept her word. Therefore was there a desolation among all the Sancerrois.

" Why does Madame de la Baudraye compose no more verses ? " was the cry of all the world.

At this period, Madame de la Baudraye had no longer any enemies, everyone pressed to see her, not a week went by without there being new presentations. The wife of the president of the tribunal, an august bourgeoise née Popinot-Chandier, had told her son, a young man of twenty-two, to go to La Baudraye to pay his court, and complimented herself on seeing her Gatien in the good graces of this superior woman. The phrase *femme supérieure* had replaced the grotesque surname of Sappho of Saint-Satur. The president's wife, who during nine years had directed the opposition against Dinah, was so pleased to see her son well received, that she said an infinite amount of good of the Muse of Sancerre.

" After all," she cried, replying to a tirade from Madame de Clagny, who hated to the death the

alleged mistress of her husband, "she is the most beautiful woman and the most intellectual in all Berri!"

After having rolled in so many thickets, after having thrown herself into a thousand different paths, after dreaming of love in its splendor, after breathing the sufferings of the blackest dramas, finding in them that the sombre pleasures are bought cheaply, so fatiguing had the monotony of her life become, that one day Dinah fell into the ditch which she had sworn to avoid. On seeing Monsieur de Clagny continually sacrificing himself, refusing to be advocate-general at Paris, where family ties called him, she said to herself: "He loves me!" She overcame her repugnance and appeared to be willing to crown so faithful a constancy. It was to this impulse of generosity in her that Sancerre owed the coalition in favor of Monsieur de Clagny which was brought about at the elections. Madame de la Baudraye had dreamed of following to Paris the deputy of Sancerre. But, notwithstanding the most solemn promises, the hundred and fifty votes given to the adorer of the fair Dinah, who wished to place the simar of keeper of the seals on the shoulders of this defender of the widow and the orphan, changed themselves into an *imposing minority* of fifty votes. The jealousy of the president, Boirouge, the hatred of Monsieur Gravier, who dreaded the preponderating influence of the candidate in Dinah's heart, were made the most of by a young sous-préfet who, for this, the doctrinaires caused to be named prefect.

"I shall never console myself," he said to one of his friends on leaving Sancerre, "for not having been able to please Madame de la Baudraye, my triumph would have been complete—"

This domestic life inwardly so tormented, presented a calm exterior, two beings, badly mated but resigned, I know not what of decency, of order, this falsehood which society requires, but which weighed on Dinah like an insupportable harness. Why did she wish to take off her mask after having worn it for twelve years? Whence came this weariness when each day augmented her hope of being left a widow? If all the phases of this existence have been followed, the different deceptions to which Dinah—like a great many women, moreover, —had lent herself, may be readily comprehended. From the desire of ruling Monsieur de la Baudraye, she had passed to the hope of being a mother. Between the first discussions of the household arrangements and the sad knowledge of her fate, quite a period of time had elapsed. Then, when she wished to console herself, the consoler, Monsieur de Chargebœuf, had gone away. The enthusiasm, the carrying away, which brings about the faults of the greater number of women, had then been wanting for her up to this time. If there are, in fact, women who go straight to a fault, are there not a great many of them who cling to a number of hopes, and who only arrive there after having wandered in a labyrinth of secret misfortunes? Such was Dinah. She was so little disposed to be false to her duty,

that she did not love Monsieur de Clagny enough to pardon him his want of success. Her installation in the Château d'Anzy, the arrangement of her collections, of her curiosities, which received a new value from this magnificent and grandiose frame which Philibert Delorme seemed to have built for this museum, occupied her for some months and permitted her to meditate one of those resolutions which surprise the public, from whom the motives are hidden, but who frequently discover them by dint of gossiping and supposing.

The reputation of Lousteau, who was reputed to be a man of gallantry because of his liaisons with actresses, attracted Madame de la Baudraye;— she wished to make his acquaintance, she read his works and developed a passion for him, less perhaps because of his talent than because of his success with women; she invented, in order to bring him into the country, the obligation under which Sancerre lay, of electing in the coming elections one of the two celebrities of the department. She caused the illustrious physician to be written to by Gatien Boirouge, who claimed to be a cousin of Bianchon through the Popinots; then she instigated an old friend of the late Madame Lousteau to reawaken the ambition of the writer by informing him of the intention of certain personages in Sancerre to choose their deputy among the celebrated men in Paris. Wearied with her mediocre surroundings, Madame de la Baudraye was finally going to see some truly superior men, she would be able to ennoble her

fault with all the splendor of glory. Neither Lousteau nor Bianchon replied: perhaps they were waiting for the vacations. Bianchon, who, in the preceding year, had obtained his chair after a brilliant competition, could not leave his course of instruction.

In the month of September, in the midst of the vintage, the two Parisians arrived in their natal country, and found themselves plunged into the absorbing occupation of the harvest of 1836; there was therefore no manifestation of public opinion in their favor.

"We shall have to return them their money," said Lousteau to his compatriot, in the language of the box-office.

In 1836, Lousteau, fatigued with sixteen years of struggle in Paris, worn as much by pleasure as by poverty, by work and by errors, appeared to be forty-eight years of age, although he was but thirty-seven. Already bald, he had assumed a Byronian air in harmony with his anticipated ruins, with the ravines traced in his face by the abuse of the wine of Champagne. He charged the stigmata of debauchery to the account of the literary life, accusing the press of being murderous, he caused it to be understood that it devoured great talents, so as to give a value to his own lassitude. He thought it necessary to exaggerate in his own country both his false disdain for life and his sham misanthropy. Nevertheless, his eyes sometimes still blazed, like volcanoes that have been thought extinct; and he

endeavored to replace by the elegance of his appearance all that was lacking in him of youthfulness in the eyes of women.

Horace Bianchon, decorated with the Legion of Honor, stout and large, like a popular physician, had a patriarchal air, thick, fair hair, a rounded forehead, the chest and shoulders of a worker and the calm of a thinker. This physiognomy, sufficiently unpoetical, was admirably calculated to set off his light compatriot.

These two illustrious personages remained unknown for a whole morning at the inn where they had alighted, and Monsieur de Clagny only learned of their arrival by chance. Madame de la Baudraye, in despair, sent Gatien Boirouge, who owned no vines, to invite the two Parisians to come and spend a few days at the Château d'Anzy. For a year past, Dinah had been acting the châtelaine, and spending the winters only at La Baudraye. Monsieur Gravier, the procureur du roi, the president and Gatien Boirouge offered to the two celebrated men a banquet at which were present the most literary personages of the town. On learning that the beautiful Madame de la Baudraye was Jan Diaz, the two Parisians allowed themselves to be conducted to the Château d'Anzy, for a visit of three days, in a *charàbancs* which Gatien drove himself. This young man, full of illusions, represented Madame de la Baudraye to the two Parisians not only as the most beautiful woman of the Sancerrois, as a superior woman and one capable of inspir-

ing jealousy in George Sand, but still more as a woman who would produce the most profound sensation in Paris. Therefore the astonishment of Doctor Bianchon and of the bantering feuilletonist was remarkable, though repressed, when they perceived on the perron of Anzy, the châtelaine dressed in a light, black kerseymere, with a neckerchief, like a riding-dress without a train; for they recognized enormous pretensions in this excessive simplicity. Dinah wore a beret in black velvet *à la Raphaël* from under which her hair escaped in great curls. This dress set in relief a sufficiently pretty figure, fine eyes, handsome eyelids almost withered by the ennuis of the life which we have sketched. In Berri, the strangeness of this *artistic* appearance disguised the romantic affectations of the superior woman. When they perceived the pretty airs of their too agreeable hostess, which were in some sort the pretty airs of soul and of thought, the two friends exchanged a glance and assumed a profoundly serious attitude to listen to Madame de la Baudraye, who made to them a studied allocution in which she thanked them for having come to break the monotony of her life. Dinah promenaded her guests around the lawn ornamented with great baskets of flowers which displayed themselves before the façade of Anzy.

"How is it," asked Lousteau the mystifier, "that a woman as beautiful as you, and who appears to be so superior, can remain in the provinces? What do you do to resist this life?"

"Oh! that is it," said the châtelaine. "You do not resist. A profound despair or a stupid resignation, one or the other, there is no choice, that is the tufa upon which our existence is based and in which are absorbed a thousand stagnant thoughts, which, without fertilizing the earth, nourish in it the sickly flowers of our barren souls. Do not think that it is lack of thought! Lack of thought leads to despair or to resignation. Each woman then gives herself up to that which, according to her character, seems to her to be a pleasure. Some throw themselves into preserving and into washing-lyes, into domestic economy, into the rural pleasures of the vintage or the harvest, into the preservation of fruits, into the embroidery of fichus, into maternal cares, into the little intrigues of the town. Others trifle over a perpetual piano which sounds like a cauldron at the end of the seventh year, and which comes to end its days, asthmatic, at the Château d'Anzy. Some of the pious ones entertain themselves with different inventions concerning the word of God:—the Abbé Fritaud is compared with the Abbé Guinard. You play cards in the evenings, you dance for twelve years with the same persons, in the same salons, at the same periods. This beautiful life is intermingled with solemn promenades on the Mail, with visits of etiquette between women who ask you where you buy your dry-goods. The conversation is bounded on the south of the intelligence by observations upon the intrigues hidden at the bottom of the stagnant waters of provincial life, on the north by the mar-

riages talked of, on the west by jealousies, on the east by little, sharp words. Thus, as you see," said she, striking an attitude, "a woman is wrinkled at twenty-nine, ten years before the period fixed by the prescriptions of Doctor Bianchon, she becomes red and pimpled also very promptly, and yellows like a quince when she is of the yellowing kind,—we know some that turn green. When we arrive at this point, we wish to justify our normal state. We therefore attack with our teeth, sharp as those of field-mice, the terrible passions of Paris. We have here Puritans against the grain who tear up the laces of coquetry and gnaw at the poetry of your Parisian beauties, who spatter the happiness of others by extolling their own nuts and their rusty bacon, by exalting their own economical mouse-hole, the dull colors and the monastic perfumes of our beautiful Sancerroise life."

"I admire this courage, madame," said Bianchon. "When you experience such misfortunes, it requires wit and spirit to make of them virtues."

Stupefied by the brilliant manœuvre by which Dinah delivered the province over to her guests, whose sarcasms were thus all forestalled, Gatien Boirouge nudged Lousteau with his elbow, giving him at the same time a look and a smile which said: "Hein! did I deceive you?"

"But, madame," said Lousteau, "you prove to us that we are still in Paris. I should like to steal from you that tirade, it would be worth ten francs to me in my feuilleton."

ON THE PERRON OF ANZY

When they perceived the pretty airs of their too agreeable hostess, which were in some sort the pretty airs of soul and of thought, the two friends exchanged a glance and assumed a profoundly serious attitude to listen to Madame de la Baudraye, who made to them a studied allocution in which she thanked them for having come to break the monotony of her life.

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Pierre VIDAL

"Oh! monsieur," she replied, "mistrust the women of the provinces."

"And why?" asked Lousteau.

Madame de la Baudraye had the cunning, innocent enough moreover, to notify each of these two Parisians, between whom she wished to choose a vanquisher, of the trap in which he would be caught, thinking that at the moment when he should not see it, she would be the stronger.

"You deride them when you first arrive; then when you have lost the memory of the Parisian brilliancy, in seeing the provincial woman in her sphere, you make court to her, if only for a pastime. You whose passions have rendered you celebrated, you will be the object of attentions that will flatter you—" "Take care," cried Dinah, making a coquettish gesture and placing herself by these sarcastic reflections above the reach of the ridicule of the province and of Lousteau. "When a poor little provincial woman conceives some eccentric passion for a superiority, for a Parisian wandering in the provinces, she makes of it something more than a sentiment, she finds in it an occupation and carries it through all her life. There is nothing more dangerous than the attachment of a provincial woman,—she compares, she studies, she reflects, she dreams, she does not abandon her dream, she thinks of him whom she loves when he whom she loves no longer thinks of her. Now, one of the fatalities which most heavily weigh upon the woman of the provinces is that sudden termination of her passion, which is so often

seen in England. In the provinces, life maintained in a state of Indian watchfulness, compels a woman to walk straight in her track or to leave it suddenly, like a railway engine which encounters an obstacle. The strategic combats of passion, the coquetries which are the half of the Parisienne, nothing of that exists here."

"That is true," said Lousteau, "there are *surprises* in the heart of the woman of the provinces, as in certain toys.

"Oh! *Mon Dieu!*" replied Dinah, "a woman has spoken to you three times during a winter, she has enclosed you in her heart unknown to herself; there comes a party in the country, a promenade, everything is said, or, if you prefer, everything is done. This conduct, absurd for those who do not observe, has in it something very natural. Instead of calumniating the woman of the provinces by believing her to be depraved, a poet like yourself, or a philosopher, an observer like Doctor Bianchon, would know how to divine the marvellous unpublished poetry; in short, all the pages of this beautiful romance the dénouement of which profits some happy sub-lieutenant, some great man of the province."

"The women of the provinces whom I have seen in Paris," said Lousteau, "were, in fact, sufficiently dashing actresses—"

"Dear me! they are curious," said the châtelaine, emphasizing her word by a slight movement of her shoulders.

"They are like those amateurs who come to the

second representation, certain that the piece will not be taken off," replied the journalist.

"What is then the source of your evils?" asked Bianchon.

"Paris is the monster which causes our griefs," replied the superior woman. "The evil has a range of seven leagues and afflicts the whole country. The province does not exist by itself. There only where the nation is divided into fifty little states, there each one can have his own physiognomy, and a woman there reflects the brilliancy of the sphere in which she reigns. This social phenomenon may be still seen, I have been told, in Italy, in Switzerland and in Germany; but in France, as in all other countries with but one capital, the levelling of manners and customs will be the necessary consequence of centralization."

"Manners, then, according to you, will take on movement and originality only through a federation of French states forming one sole empire?" asked Lousteau.

"That is perhaps not to be desired, for France would still have to conquer too much country," said Bianchon.

"England does not know this misfortune," exclaimed Dinah. "London does not exercise the tyranny which Paris causes to weigh upon France, and for which the French genius will end by finding a remedy;—but she has something more horrible in her atrocious hypocrisy, which is a very different evil!"

"The English aristocracy," said the journalist, who foresaw a Byronian sally and hastened to take the word, "has over us the advantage of assimilating all superiorities, it lives in its magnificent parks, it comes to London *for two months only,* neither more nor less; it lives in the provinces, it flourishes in them and makes them flourish."

"Yes," said Madame de la Baudraye, "London is the capital of shops and of speculation, the government is made there. The aristocracy inscribes itself there only during sixty days, it there takes its orders, it inspects the government kitchen, it passes in review its daughters to marry, and equipages to sell, it says good-day and goes away promptly;—it is so little amusing that it supports itself only for the few days called *the season.*"

"Thus, in the perfidious Albion of the *Constitutionnel,*" exclaimed Lousteau, to repress by an epigram this nimbleness of language, "there are chances of encountering charming women in all points of the kingdom."

"But charming Englishwomen!" replied Madame de la Baudraye, smiling. "Here is my mother, to whom I am going to present you," she said, seeing Madame Piédefer coming.

When the presentation of the two lions had been made to that ambitious skeleton in the name of a woman, which was called Madame Piédefer, a large, dry body, with a pimpled face, doubtful teeth, dyed hair, Dinah left the Parisians free for a few minutes.

"Well," said Gatien to Lousteau, "what do you think of her?"

"I think that the cleverest woman in Sancerre is quite honestly the greatest talker," replied the feuilletonist.

"A woman who wishes to see you named deputy!—" cried Gatien, "an angel!"

"Forgive me, I forgot that you love her," replied Lousteau. You will excuse the cynicism of an old humbug like myself. Ask Bianchon, I no longer have any illusions, I say things as they are. This woman has certainly dried up her mother like a partridge exposed to a too hot fire."

Gatien Boirouge found an opportunity to repeat to Madame de la Baudraye the feuilletonist's remark during the dinner, which was abundant, if not splendid, and during which the châtelaine was careful to talk but little. This languor in the conversation revealed Gatien's indiscretion. Étienne endeavored to restore himself to grace, but all the attentions of Dinah were for Bianchon. Nevertheless, about the middle of the evening, the baroness became gracious to Lousteau again. Have you not remarked how many despicable actions are committed for small causes? Thus this noble Dinah, who did not wish to give herself to boors, who led in the heart of her province a frightful life of struggles, of suppressed revolts, of unpublished poetry, and who had just ascended, in order to withdraw herself from Lousteau, the highest and most precipitous cliff of her disdain, who would not have

descended therefrom if she had seen this false Byron at her feet suing for mercy, suddenly tumbled down from this height when she thought of her album. Madame de la Baudraye had given herself over to the mania of autographs; she possessed an oblong volume which deserved its name all the more that two-thirds of the leaves were blank. The Baronne de Fontaine, to whom she had sent it for three months, had obtained with much trouble a line from Rossini, six measures of Meyerbeer, the four verses which Victor Hugo inscribed in all albums, a strophe of Lamartine, a word from Béranger, *Calypso ne pouvait se consoler du dèpart d'Ulysse,* written by George Sand, the famous verses upon the umbrella by Scribe, a phrase from Charles Nodier, a horizon line by Jules Dupré, the signature of David of Angers, three notes from Hector Berlioz. Monsieur de Clagny had gathered, during a visit to Paris, a song by Lacenaire, an autograph very much sought after, two lines from Fieschi, and an excessively short letter from Napoléon, all three of these being pasted on the vellum of the album. Monsieur Gravier, during a journey, had caused to write in this album, Mesdemoiselles Mars, Georges, Taglioni and Grisi, the first artistes, as well as Frédérick Lemaître, Monrose, Bouffé, Rubini, Lablanche, Nourrit and Arnal; for he knew a society of old fellows *nursed,* according to their own expression, *in the seraglio,* who procured these favors for him. This commencement of a collection was all the more precious to Dinah that she was the only possessor of an album in a circle of

ten leagues around. For the last two years a number of young persons had albums in which they collected phrases more or less absurd written by their friends and acquaintances. O you who pass your life in gathering autographs, primitive souls and happy, Hollanders with tulips, you will then excuse Dinah when, fearing that she could keep her guests only two days, she entreated Bianchon to enrich her treasure by a few lines, presenting it to him.

The doctor made Lousteau smile by showing him this thought upon the first page :

That which renders the people so dangerous, is that it has for its crimes an absolution in its pockets.

J.-B. DE CLAGNY.

"Let us support this man who is courageous enough to plead the cause of the monarchy," said in Lousteau's ear the wise pupil of Desplein. And Bianchon wrote underneath :

That which distinguishes Napolèon from a water-carrier can only be perceived by society, it has nothing to do with nature. Thus democracy, which refuses to accept the inequality of conditions, is ceaselessly appealing to nature.

H. BIANCHON.

"Look at the wealthy!" cried Dinah in stupefaction, "they draw a piece of gold from their pockets just as the poor pull out a farthing.—I do not

know," she said, turning to Lousteau, "if it would not abuse hospitality to ask of you a few stanzas—"

"Ah! madame, you flatter me! Bianchon is a great man; but, I, I am too obscure!—In twenty years from now, my name will be more difficult to explain than that of monsieur le procureur du roi whose thought, inscribed in your album, would certainly indicate an unacknowledged Montesquieu. Moreover, I should require at least twenty-four hours to improvise some truly bitter reflection; for I know how to depict only that which I feel—"

"I should be glad to have you ask me for two weeks," said Madame de la Baudraye graciously, offering him her album, "I should be enabled to keep you so much longer."

*

The next morning, at five o'clock, the guests of the Château d'Anzy were on foot. The little La Baudraye had organized for the Parisians a hunting party ; less for their pleasure than through his own vanity as a landed proprietor, he was very well satisfied to have them measure his woodland and traverse the twelve hundred hectares of land that he dreamed of getting under culture, an undertaking that would require some hundred thousand francs, but which might increase the revenues of the estate of Anzy from thirty to sixty thousand francs.

"Do you know why the procureur du roi did not wish to hunt with us?" said Gatien Boirouge to Monsieur Gravier.

"Why he told us that he had to hold court to-day, for the tribunal sits in criminal cases," replied the receiver of taxes.

"And you believe that?" cried Gatien. "Well, my papa said to me: 'You cannot have Monsieur Lebas very early, for Monsieur de Clagny has asked his deputy to hold court.'"

"Ah! ah!" said Gravier, whose countenance

changed; "and Monsieur de la Baudraye is going off to La Charité!"

"But why do you meddle in these affairs?" said Horace Bianchon to Gatien.

"Horace is right," said Lousteau. "I do not understand why you occupy yourselves so much with each other, you lose your time for nothing."

Horace Bianchon looked at Étienne Lousteau as if to say to him that the malicious sayings of the feuilleton, the smart speeches of the small journal were not understood in Sancerre. As they reached a thicket, Monsieur Gravier allowed the two celebrated men and Gatien to make their way into it, under the conduct of the guard, in a depression of the soil.

"Well, let us wait for the financier," said Bianchon, when the hunters had arrived at a clearing.

"Ah, well! if you are a great man in the science of medicine," replied Gatien, "you are very ignorant in matters of life in the provinces. You will wait for Monsieur Gravier?—Why he is running like a hare, notwithstanding his little plump belly; he is now at twenty minutes from Anzy."—Gatien drew out his watch.—"Good! he will arrive just in time."

"Where?"

"At the château, for the déjeuner," replied Gatien. "Do you think that I should be at my ease if Madame de la Baudraye remained alone with Monsieur de Clagny? Now there are two of them,

they will watch each other, Dinah will be well guarded."

"Ah! there! Madame de la Baudraye is then to make a choice?" said Lousteau.

"Mamma thinks so, but, for my part, I am afraid that Monsieur de Clagny has succeeded in fascinating Madame de la Baudraye; if he has been able to show her in the deputation some prospects of his assuming the simar of keeper of the seals, he has been quite able to change into the charms of Adonis his skin of a mole, his terrible eyes, his dishevelled mane, his voice of a court crier with a cold, his leanness of a poor devil of a poet. If Dinah should see Monsieur de Clagny procureur-général, she might see him as a pretty youth. Eloquence has great privileges. Moreover, Madame de la Baudraye is full of ambition, Sancerre displeases her, she dreams of Parisian grandeurs."

"But what interest have you in all this?" asked Lousteau; "for, if she loves the procureur du roi,—Ah! you think that she will not love him very long, and you hope to succeed him."

"You, you see," said Gatien, "you meet in Paris as many different women as there are days in the year. But at Sancerre where there are only six, and where, out of those six women, five make most preposterous claims to virtue, when the most beautiful one keeps you at an enormous distance by disdainful glances, as if she were a princess of the blood royal, it is quite permissible for a young man of twenty-two to endeavor to discover this woman's

secrets, for then she will be obliged to have some consideration for him."

"That is called here consideration," said the journalist, smiling.

"I give Madame de la Baudraye credit for too much good taste to believe that she would take up with that ugly monkey," said Horace Bianchon.

"Horace," said the journalist, "see now, wise interpreter of human nature, let us set a trap for the procureur du roi, we will render a service to our friend Gatien, and we shall have something to laugh at. I do not like the procureurs du roi."

"You have a just presentiment of your end," said Horace. "But what is to be done?"

"Well, we will relate, after dinner, some stories of wives surprised by their husbands, who were killed, assassinated, under the most terrifying circumstances. We will see how Madame de la Baudraye and Monsieur de Clagny take it."

"That is not bad," said Bianchon, "it will be difficult for one or the other not to be betrayed by a gesture or by an observation."

"I am acquainted with the director of a publication," said the journalist, addressing Gatien, "who, with the object of avoiding a sad destiny for himself, admits only stories in which the lovers are burnt, chopped up, pounded, dissected; in which the wives are boiled, fried, cooked; he brings then these terrible stories to his wife in the hope that she will remain faithful through fear; he contents himself with this poor alternative, the modest husband:—'Do you

see, ma mignonne, to what the smallest fault will lead!' he says to her, translating the discourse of Arnolphe to Agnès."

"Madame de la Baudraye is perfectly innocent, this young man sees double," said Bianchon. "Madame Piédefer appeared to me to be much too pious to invite to the Château d'Anzy the lover of her daughter. Madame de la Baudraye would have to deceive her mother, her husband, her own femme de chambre and that of her mother; it is too much of an undertaking,— I acquit her."

"All the more that her husband does not quit her," said Gatien, laughing at his pun.

"We shall certainly remember one or two stories that will make Dinah tremble," said Lousteau. "Young man, and you, Bianchon, I require of you a severe appearance, show yourself diplomats, have a freedom without affectation, watch, without seeming to do so, the faces of the two criminals, you know?—from underneath, or in the mirror, surreptitiously. This morning we are hunting the hare; this evening we will hunt the procureur du roi."

The evening commenced triumphantly for Lousteau, who returned to the châtelaine her album, in which she found this elegy:

SPLEEN

Some lines from me, forlorn and lost amid the throng,
The selfish crowd, through which I sadly grope along,
With ne'er a binding tie;
Who never sees a single hope its promise fill,

Whose weakened eyes by gloomy sorrow dimmed, the ill
But not the good espy.

This album's leaves, by woman's finger lightly turned,
From my sad soul should not one gloomy shade have learned.
Each thing its place should seek;
One should of love, of joy, to woman only tell,
And on the theme of balls and silken raiment dwell,
Of God, too, sometimes speak.

'Twere bitter mockery, a heartless, cruel jest
To say to me, to me by life's fatigues distressed:
Paint happiness for us!
To one born blind could we the glorious light extol,
Or of its mother speak to some poor orphaned soul,
And break its heart not thus?

When chill despair in youth has closed your life around,
When in the world no heart that answers yours is found,
The future holds no boon.
If when you weep, none sheds a sympathetic tear,
If man must die when no loved being holds him dear,
Then must I perish soon.

Oh! pity me! oh! pity me! oft I revile,
The Holy Name of God, reflecting all the while:
"He has done naught for me.
Why render praise to Him, what owe I Him, in fine?
He might have made me handsome, rich, of noble line,
Not poor and vile to see!"

ÉTIENNE LOUSTEAU.

September, 1836, Château d'Anzy.

"And you have composed these verses since yesterday?" exclaimed the procureur du roi in a mistrustful tone.

"Oh! *Mon Dieu,* yes, while I was hunting, but that is done only too often! I should like to have done better for madame."

"These verses are ravishing," said Dinah, lifting her eyes to Heaven.

"They are the expression of a sentiment unfortunately too true," replied Lousteau with a deeply mournful air.

Every one will suspect that the journalist had preserved these verses in his memory for at least ten years, for he was inspired with them under the Restoration, by the difficulty of succeeding. Madame de la Baudraye looked at the journalist with the pity which the misfortunes of genius inspire, and Monsieur de Clagny, who perceived this look, conceived a hatred for this false *Jeune Malade.* He set himself to playing backgammon with the curé of Sancerre. The president's son had the exceeding consideration to bring the lamp to the two players, so that the light fell full upon Madame de la Baudraye, who took her work; she was trimming with a woollen stuff the wicker-work of a paper-basket. The three conspirators grouped themselves around these personages.

"For whom are you making that pretty basket, madame?" said the journalist. "For some lottery for charity?"

"No," said she, "I find too much *affectation* in charity exercised to the sound of the trumpet."

"You are very indiscreet," said Monsieur Gravier.

"Is there any indiscretion," said Lousteau, "in

asking who is the happy mortal who will be found in possession of madame's basket?"

"There is no happy mortal," replied Dinah, "it is for Monsieur de la Baudraye."

The procureur du roi looked askance at Madame de la Baudraye and at the basket, as if he were saying to himself; "There is my paper-basket lost!"

"How, madame, you are not willing that we should call it happy to have a pretty wife, happy that she should make for him such charming things on paper-baskets? The design is red and black, *à la Robin des bois*. If I should marry, I should wish that after twelve years of household life, the baskets that my wife embroiders should be for me."

"Why should they not be for you?" said Madame de la Baudraye, lifting to Étienne her fine gray eye full of coquetry.

"The Parisians believe in nothing," said the procureur du roi in a bitter tone. "The virtue of wives is especially called into question with a frightful audacity. Yes, for some time now, the books that you make, messieurs the writers, your reviews, your plays at the theatres, all your infamous literature, is based upon adultery—"

"Oh! monsieur le procureur du roi," replied Étienne, laughing, "I was permitting you to play in peace, I was not attacking you in any way, and here you are bringing an action against me. On the faith of a journalist, I have scribbled more than a hundred articles against the authors of whom you speak; but I admit that, if I have attacked them,

it was to say something that resembled criticism. Let us be just, if you condemn them, we must condemn Homer and his *Iliad* which turns upon the beautiful Helen; we must condemn the *Paradise Lost* of Milton, Eve and her serpent appearing to me to be only a gentle little symbolical adultery. We must suppress the Psalms of David, inspired by the excessively adulterous loves of that Hebrew Louis XIV. We must throw into the fire *Mithridate, le Tartuffe, l'Ecole des femmes, Phèdre, Andromaque, le Mariage de Figaro,* Dante's *Inferno,* the *Sonnets* of Petrarch, all of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the romances of the Middle Ages, the *History of France,* the *History of Rome,* etc., etc. I do not think that, outside of the *Histoire des variations* of Bossuet and the *Provinciales* of Pascal, that there are many books to read, if you wish to strike out all those in which there is a question of women loved contrary to law."

"So much the worse!" said Monsieur de Clagny.

Étienne, piqued at the magisterial air which Monsieur de Clagny assumed, wished to get him into a rage by one of those cold mystifications which consist in defending opinions which you do not hold, with the object of driving furious a poor man of simple faith,—a veritable journalist jest.

"In taking the political point of view, which you are forced to take," he continued, without noticing the magistrate's exclamation, "in assuming the robe of procureur-général for all periods, for every government has its public minister, well, the Catholic reli-

gion finds itself infected at its very source with a flagrant conjugal infidelity. In the eyes of King Herod, in those of Pilate who defended the Roman government, the wife of Joseph could have appeared to be adulterous, for, by her own account, Joseph was not the father of Christ. The pagan judge no more admitted the immaculate conception than you would admit to-day a similar miracle, if some new religion were to appear to-day, basing itself upon a miracle of this kind. Do you think that a tribunal of the correctional police would recognize a new operation of the Holy Ghost? Now, who will venture to say that God will not come again to redeem humanity, is it better to-day than it was under Tiberius?"

"Your reasoning is sacrilegious," replied the procureur du roi.

"Agreed," said the journalist; "but I am not doing it with an evil intent. You cannot suppress historic facts. As it seems to me, Pilate condemning Jesus-Christ, Anytus, the organ of the party of the aristocracy in Athens, demanding the death of Socrates, represent established societies, believing themselves legitimate, clothed with granted powers, obliged to defend themselves. Pilate and Anytus were then as logical as the procureurs-généraux who demanded the heads of the sergeants of La Rochelle and who strike off to-day the heads of the Republicans armed against the throne of July, and those of the innovators whose object is to overthrow for their own gain all societies under pretext of better organiz-

ing them. Before the great families of Athens and of the Roman Empire, Socrates and Jesus were criminals; for these old aristocracies, in opinions resembled those of the Mountain,—suppose their followers had triumphed, they would have brought about a slight '93 in the Roman Empire, or in Attica."

"What do you wish to get at, monsieur?" said the procureur du roi.

"At adultery. Thus, monsieur, a Buddhist, while smoking his pipe, might perfectly well say that the religion of the Christians is founded on adultery; just as we believe that Mohammed is an impostor, that his Koran is another printing of the Bible and the Gospels, and that God never had the slightest intention of making of this camel-driver, his prophet."

"If there were in France many men like you, and there are unfortunately too many, all government in it would be impossible."

"And there would be no religion in it," said Madame Piédefer, whose countenance had undergone some strange transformations during this discussion.

"You are causing them infinite pain," said Bianchon in Étienne's ear, "do not talk religion, you are saying to them things that will overturn them."

"If I were a writer or a romancer," said Monsieur Gravier, "I would take the part of the unfortunate husbands. I who have seen a great many things, and strange things, I know that, among the numbers of deceived husbands, there are those to be found whose attitude is not wanting in energy and who,

in the crisis, are very dramatic, to employ one of your words, monsieur," he said, looking at Étienne.

"You are right, my dear Monsieur Gravier," said Lousteau, "I have never found the deceived husbands ridiculous; on the contrary, I love them—"

"Do you not find a husband sublime in his confidence?" then said Bianchon; "he believes in his wife, he suspects nothing, he has an implicit faith. If he has the weakness to confide in his wife, you deride him; if he is suspicious and jealous, you hate him; tell me, what is the happy medium for an intelligent man?"

"If monsieur le procureur du roi had not pronounced so openly against the immorality of those recitals in which the conjugal charter is violated, I would relate to you a husband's vengeance," said Lousteau.

Monsieur de Clagny threw his dice in a convulsive manner and did not look at the journalist.

"How, really, a narration from you!" cried Madame de la Baudraye, "I would scarcely have ventured to ask it of you—"

"It is not mine, madame, I have not so much talent; it was—and with what charm!—related to me by one of our most celebrated writers, the greatest literary musician that we have, Charles Nodier."

"Well, tell it to us," replied Dinah, "I have never heard Monsieur Nodier, you have no comparisons to fear."

"A short time after the 18th Brumaire," said Lousteau, "you know that there was a great uprising in Brittany and in La Vendée. The first consul desiring to pacify France quickly, entered into negotiations with the principal chiefs and set on foot the most vigorous military measures, but, while combining his plans of campaign with the seductions of his Italian diplomacy, he called into play the Machiavellian resources of the police, then confided to Fouché. Nothing of all this was without its use for extinguishing the war lighted in the West. At this period a young man belonging to the family of Maillé was sent by the Chouans from Brittany to Saumur in order to establish communications between certain persons in the city or in the environs and the chiefs of the royalist insurrection. Informed of this journey, the police of Paris had despatched agents to capture the young emissary on his arrival at Saumur. In fact, the ambassador was arrested on the very day that he landed; for he came in a boat, in the disguise of a master mariner. But, as a man of execution, he had calculated all the chances of his enterprise,—his passport, his papers, were so completely *en règle* that those sent to arrest him feared that they had been deceived. The Chevalier de Beauvoir,—I now remember his name—had carefully thought out his rôle,—he claimed his borrowed family name, alleged his fictitious domicile, and sustained so courageously his interrogation, that he would have been set at liberty had it not been for the species of blind faith which the spies had in their

instructions, unfortunately too precise. When in doubt, these alguazils preferred to commit an arbitrary act rather than to allow to escape a man to whose capture the minister appeared to attach a great importance. In those days of liberty, the agents of the national power concerned themselves but little with what we call to-day *legality*. The chevalier was then temporarily imprisoned, until the superior authorities had come to a decision in his case. This bureaucratic sentence was not long delayed. The police were ordered to guard the prisoner very closely, notwithstanding his denials. The Chevalier de Beauvoir was then transferred according to new orders, to the Château de l'Escarpe, the name of which indicates its situation with sufficient clearness. This fortress, seated on rocky cliffs of great height, has precipices for ditches ; it is reached on every side only by rapid and dangerous slopes ; as in all the ancient castles, the principal entrance is over a drawbridge and is defended by a large moat. The commandant of this prison, charmed to have the care of a man of distinction, whose manners were very agreeable, who expressed himself marvellously well and appeared to be educated, qualities rare at this epoch, accepted the chevalier as a benefit from Providence ; he proposed to him to remain in L'Escarpe on parole, and to make common cause with him against ennui. The prisoner asked nothing better. Beauvoir was a loyal gentleman, but he was also, unfortunately, a very handsome youth. He had an attractive face, a resolute air, an engag-

ing conversation, a prodigious strength. Quick, well set up, enterprising, loving danger, he would have made an excellent chief of partisans; they require these qualities. The commandant assigned the most commodious of the apartments to his prisoner, admitted him to his table, and at first had nothing but praise for the Vendean. This commandant was a Corsican, and married; his wife, pretty and charming, perhaps seemed to him somewhat difficult to guard; in short, he was jealous in his character both as a Corsican and as a sufficiently morose soldier. Beauvoir pleased the lady, he found her very much to his taste; perhaps they fell in love with each other! In prison, love comes so quickly. Were they guilty of some imprudence? Did the sentiment which they entertained for each other pass the limits of that superficial gallantry which is almost one of our duties toward women? Beauvoir never frankly revealed the facts concerning this sufficiently obscure point in his history; but it is quite certain that the commandant believed himself justified in exercising extraordinary rigor toward his prisoner. Beauvoir, imprisoned in the tower, was fed on black bread, tempered with clear water, and chained, all according to the ancient programme of diversions provided for captives. The cell, situated under the flat roof, was vaulted in hard stone, the walls were of a hopeless thickness, the tower looked over the precipice. When the poor Beauvoir recognized the impossibility of escape, he fell into one of those moods which are at once the despair and the conso-

lation of prisoners. He occupied himself with those nothings which become great events,—he counted the hours and the days, he served his apprenticeship to that sorrowful *prisoner's condition*, was thrown back upon himself, and learned to appreciate the full value of the air and the sun; then, at the end of some two weeks, he experienced that terrible illness, that fever of liberty which urges prisoners to those sublime enterprises the prodigious results of which seem to us inexplicable, though real, and which my friend the doctor—he turned toward Bianchon—would doubtless attribute to unknown forces, the despair of his physiological analysis, mysteries of the human will before whose profundities science is terrified.—Bianchon made a sign of negation.—Beauvoir devoured his own heart, for death alone could set him at liberty. One morning the turnkey whose duty it was to bring the prisoner's food, instead of going away after having given him his meagre pittance, remained standing before him with his arms crossed and looked at him in a singular manner. The conversation between them was ordinarily reduced to the briefest speech, and it was never the guardian who opened it. Therefore the chevalier was very much surprised when this man said to him:

"'Monsieur, you have doubtless your own object in view in persisting in calling yourself Monsieur Lebrun, or citizen Lebrun. That is none of my affair, my business is not to verify your name. Whether you call yourself Peter or Paul, is quite

indifferent to me. Everyone to his trade, and the cows will be well kept. Nevertheless, I know,' said he, winking his eye, 'that you are Monsieur Charles-Félix-Théodore, Chevalier de Beauvoir and cousin of Madame la Duchesse de Maillé.—What do you say to that?' he added with an air of triumph, after a moment's silence, looking at his prisoner.

"Beauvoir, seeing himself incarcerated hard and fast, did not think that his position could be made much worse by the avowal of his true name.

"'Well, although I am the Chevalier de Beauvoir, what will you gain by it?' he asked.

"'Oh! everything is gained,' replied the turnkey in a low voice. 'Listen to me. I have received money to facilitate your escape; but wait an instant! If I am suspected of the least thing, I shall be shot very promptly. I have therefore said that I will dip into this affair simply to earn my money. See, monsieur, take this key,' said he, taking out of his pocket a little file;—'with this you will saw one of your bars. Zounds! that will not be very easy,' he went on, indicating the narrow opening through which the daylight entered the cell.

"It was a species of opening made in the wall under the plinth which crowned the donjon wall on the exterior, between two of those heavy projecting stones which seemed to support the battlements.

"'Monsieur,' said the jailer, 'it will be necessary to saw the iron sufficiently to allow you to get through.'

"'Oh! you can be easy, I will get through,' said the prisoner.

"'And high enough to leave something to which you can attach your cord,' resumed the turnkey.

"'Where is it?' asked Beauvoir.

"'Here it is,' replied the jailer, throwing him a knotted cord. 'It has been made of linen, so as to seem as if you had made it yourself, and it is of sufficient length. When you come to the last knot, then let yourself drop gently,—the rest is your own affair. You will probably find in the neighborhood a carriage all ready waiting and friends who are expecting you. But I know nothing, I don't! I do not need to tell you that there is a sentinel at the right of the tower. You will know how to choose a black night, and to watch for the moment when the soldier on guard is asleep. You will perhaps risk being fired at, but—'

"'Good! good! I shall not rot here,' cried the chevalier.

"'Ah! that may be all the same!' replied the jailer, with a stupid air.

"Beauvoir took this for one of those stupid reflections which individuals of this kind make. The hope of soon being free rendered him so joyful that he could scarcely pay attention to the speech of this man, a sort of accented peasant. He immediately set to work, and in the course of the day he succeeded in sawing the bars. Fearing a visit from the commandant, he concealed his work by stopping up the cuts with bread crumbs, rolled in the rust so as

to give them the color of the iron. He tightened his cord and set himself to watching for a favorable night, with that concentrated impatience and that profound agitation of the soul which makes so dramatic the life of prisoners. Finally, on a gloomy night, a night of autumn, he cut the bars completely through, attached his cord solidly, crouched on the exterior on the support of the stone, clinging with one hand to the bit of iron which remained in the opening; and he thus waited for the darkest hour of the night and the moment at which the sentinels should be most drowsy. It was drawing toward morning. He knew the lengths of the reliefs, the time of the rounds, all those things with which prisoners occupy themselves, even involuntarily. He watched the moment when one of the sentinels was two-thirds through his watch and had retired into his sentry-box because of the night mist. Certain of having reunited all the most favorable chances for his escape, he then began to descend, knot by knot, suspended between heaven and earth, and clinging to his cord with the grip of a giant. Everything went well. At the last knot but one, at the moment of letting himself drop to the earth, it occurred to him, very prudently, to feel for the ground with his feet, and he could find none. The situation was sufficiently embarrassing for a man all in a sweat, fatigued, perplexed, and in a situation in which the chances for life and death were even. He was about to drop. A slight cause prevented him,—his hat fell off; fortunately he listened for the noise which its

fall must make, and he heard nothing! The prisoner began to conceive vague suspicions as to his position; he asked himself if the commandant had not set a trap for him, but with what object? A prey to these uncertainties, he almost concluded to postpone his attempt to another night. Meanwhile, he resolved to wait for the uncertain light of the twilight; an hour which perhaps would not be altogether unfavorable to his flight. His prodigious strength enabled him to climb up the tower again; but he was almost exhausted when he again reached the exterior support, where he sat watching everything like a cat on the edge of a roof gutter. Presently, in the feeble light of the morning, he perceived, by agitating his cord, a little distance of a hundred feet between the last knot and the pointed rocks of the foot of the precipice.

"'Thanks, commandant!' said he, with the coolness that characterized him.

"Then, after having reflected a little on this skilful vengeance, he judged it necessary to re-enter his cell. He placed the evidences of his work in sight on his bed, left his cord hanging so that his fall might be believed in; he concealed himself quietly behind the door and waited for the coming of the perfidious jailer, holding in his hand one of the iron bars which he had sawed out. The jailer, who did not fail to come earlier than usual to gather up the dead man's effects, opened the door, whistling, but when he was at a suitable distance, Beauvoir struck him over the head so furious a blow with the bar

that the traitor fell like a log, without uttering a cry, —the iron had fractured his skull. The chevalier promptly undressed the corpse, put the garments on himself, imitated his walk and, thanks to the early hour and the lack of suspicion of the sentinels at the principal gate, he escaped."

Neither the procureur du roi nor Madame de la Baudraye appeared to perceive that there was in this narration the slightest suggestion of prophecy concerning themselves. Those interested in the plot cast interrogating glances at each other, as if surprised at the perfect indifference of the two pretended lovers.

"Bah! I have a better story to tell you," said Bianchon.

"Let us hear it," said the auditors, at a sign from Lousteau which indicated that Bianchon had his own little reputation as a story-teller.

Among those histories which composed his stock in trade of narrations, for all clever people have a certain quantity of anecdotes on hand, as Madame de la Baudraye had her collection of phrases, the illustrious doctor selected that known under the name of *la Grande-Bretèche* and which has become so celebrated that it was brought out at the Gymnase-Dramatique as a vaudeville under the name of *Valentine*.—See *Another Study of Woman*.—Therefore it would be perfectly useless to repeat that adventure here, although it was all new matter for the inhabitants of the Château d'Anzy. It was, moreover, set off with the same perfection of ges-

tures, of intonations, which procured the doctor so many eulogies when he related it in the house of Mademoiselle des Touches for the first time. The last picture of the grandee of Spain, dying of hunger, and standing in the wardrobe in which the husband of Madame de Merret had walled him up, and the last speech of this husband, replying to his wife's last prayer : " You have sworn on this crucifix that there was no one there ! " produced their full effect. There was a moment of silence that was sufficiently flattering for Bianchon.

" Do you know, messieurs," then said Madame de la Baudraye, " that love must be something immense, to lead a woman to place herself in such situations ? "

" I who certainly have seen strange things in my life," said Monsieur Gravier, " I was almost a witness in Spain of an adventure of that kind."

" You come after the great actors," said Madame de la Baudraye to him, flattering the two Parisians with a coquettish look ; " but never mind, go ahead."

" Some time after his entry into Madrid," said the receiver of taxes, " the Grand-Duc de Berg invited the principal personages of that city to a fête offered by the French army to the newly conquered capital. Notwithstanding the splendor of the festival, the Spaniards did not laugh very much, their wives danced but little, most of the guests sat down to play. The gardens of the palace were illuminated so splendidly that the ladies could walk

about in them with as much security as they could have done in full daylight. The fête was imperially beautiful. Nothing had been spared, with the object of giving the Spaniards a lofty idea of the Emperor, if they were willing to judge him by his lieutenants. In a little grove at a short distance from the palace, between one and two o'clock in the morning, several of the French military men were discussing the prospects of the war, and the not reassuring future which the attitude of the Spaniards present at this pompous fête seemed to prophesy.

"'Upon my word,' said the surgeon-in-chief of the corps d'armée in which I was paymaster-general, 'yesterday I formally asked Prince Murat for my recall. Without being exactly afraid of leaving my bones in the Peninsula, I prefer to go and heal the wounds made by our neighbors the Germans; their weapons do not penetrate as far into the body as do the Castilian poniards. Then, the fear of Spain is with me a superstition. From my childhood I have read Spanish books, a heap of sombre adventures and a thousand stories of this country which have effectively warned me against its manners and customs. Well, since our entry into Madrid, it has already happened to me to be, if not the hero, at least the accomplice of some perilous intrigue, as black, as obscure, as could be any romance by Lady Radcliffe. I give a willing ear to my presentiments, and to-morrow I take myself off. Murat will certainly not refuse me my *congé,* for, thanks to the

services which we render, we have always efficacious protections.'

"'Since you are going to bolt, tell us your adventure,' replied a colonel, an old Republican who concerned himself but little with fine language and imperial flatteries.

"The surgeon-in-chief looked carefully around him as if to recognize the faces of those who surrounded him, and, sure that no Spaniard was in the neighborhood, he said:

"'We are all Frenchmen here; willingly, Colonel Hulot.'

"'Six days ago I was returning peacefully to my lodging, about eleven o'clock in the evening, having just left General Montcornet, whose hôtel is at a few steps from mine. We had both of us come from the house of the ordonnateur en chef, where we had had a sufficiently animated game of bouillotte. Suddenly, at the corner of a little street, two unknowns, or rather two devils, threw themselves upon me and wrapped my head and my arms in a great cloak. I cried out, as you may believe, like a whipped dog, but the cloth smothered my voice, and I was transported into a carriage with the most rapid dexterity.

"'When my two companions had relieved me of the cloak, I heard these very disagreeable words pronounced by a woman's voice in bad French:

"'"If you cry out, or if you make any sign of escaping, if you permit yourself the least doubtful gesture, the monsieur who is before you is capable

of poniarding you without scruple. Therefore keep quiet. Meanwhile I will inform you as to the cause of your abduction. If you will give yourself the trouble to stretch out your hand toward me, you will find between us two all your surgical instruments which we have sent to get from your house in your name; you will have need of them; we are conducting you to a house to save the honor of a lady who is on the point of an accouchement of an infant which she is about to give to this gentleman without her husband's knowledge. Although monsieur scarcely leaves madame, with whom he is still passionately in love, and whom he watches with all the attentiveness of Spanish jealousy, she has been able to conceal her condition from him, he thinks her ill. You will then attend to the accouchement. The dangers of the enterprise do not concern you,—only, obey us; otherwise, the lover, who is opposite you in the carriage, and who does not know a word of French, will poniard you at the slightest imprudence."

"'"And who are you?" I said to her, feeling for the hand of my interlocutor, whose arm was covered with the sleeve of a uniform coat.

"'"I am Madame's caméristе,—maid of honor,—her confidante, and quite ready to recompense you by myself, if you lend yourself gallantly to the exigencies of our situation."

"'"Willingly," I said, seeing myself enlisted by compulsion in a dangerous adventure.

"'Through favor of the darkness I proceeded to

verify the fact that the face and the form of this girl were in harmony with the ideas which the quality of her voice had given me. This good creature had doubtless resigned herself in advance to all the chances of this singular abduction, for she preserved the most obliging silence, and the carriage had not rolled through the streets of Madrid for more than ten minutes when she received and returned a satisfying kiss. The lover whom I had before me took no offence at certain kicks with which I gratified him quite involuntarily ; but, as he understood no French, I presume that he paid no attention to them.

"'"I can be your mistress only on one condition," said the camériste to me in reply to the stupidities which I retailed to her, carried away by the heat of an improvised passion to which everything was opposed.

"'"And what is that ?"

"'"You shall never endeavor to ascertain to whom I belong. If I should come to your house, it will be at night, and you will receive me without a light."

"'"Good," I replied.

"' Our conversation had reached this point when the carriage stopped near a garden wall.

"'"Let me bandage your eyes," said the femme de chambre to me ; "you will lean upon my arm, and I will conduct you myself."

"' She covered my eyes with a handkerchief which she knotted tightly behind my head. I heard the noise of a key inserted with precaution in the

lock of a little gate by the silent lover whom I had had for a vis-à-vis. Presently the femme de chambre, with her rounded form, and who had in her walk something of the *meneho*—'

"That is," said the receiver, assuming a little tone of superiority, "a word of the Spanish language, an idiom which describes the movements which the women know how to give to a certain part of the dress which you will readily conceive"—

"'The femme de chambre—I resume the narration of the surgeon-in-chief—'conducted me over the sanded alleys of a large garden to a certain point, where she stopped. By the noise which our footsteps made in the air, I supposed that we were before the house.

"'"Silence, now," she said in my ear, "and watch yourself carefully! Do not lose sight of one of my signs, I can no longer speak to you without danger for both of us, and the question is at this moment of saving your life."

"'Then she added, but aloud:

"'"Madame is in a chamber on the ground floor; to reach it, it will be necessary for us to pass into the chamber and before the bed of her husband; do not cough, walk softly, and follow me carefully, so as not to run into some piece of furniture or step outside the carpet that I have arranged."

"'Here the lover muttered sullenly like a man made impatient by so many delays. The camériste became silent, I heard a door open, I felt the warm air of an apartment, and we proceeded with stealthy

steps, like thieves on an expedition. Finally the soft hand of the girl took off my bandage. I found myself in a large chamber, quite high, and badly lit by a smoky lamp. The window was open, but it had been furnished with heavy bars of iron by the jealous husband.

"'I had been thrown in here as into the bottom of a sack. On the floor, on a mat, a woman whose head was covered with a muslin veil, but through which her eyes, filled with tears, shone with all the brilliancy of the stars, held a handkerchief pressed to her mouth and bit it so vigorously that her teeth penetrated it; never have I seen so beautiful a body, but this body was writhing under its agony like a harp chord thrown on the fire. The unhappy woman had made two arched buttresses of her legs by supporting them on a species of commode; then, with her two hands, she held on to the rounds of a chair by stretching her arms, all the veins of which were horribly swollen. She resembled thus a criminal in the agonies of the question. Not a cry, moreover, not another sound than the dull cracking of her bones. We were there, we three, mute and motionless. The snoring of the husband resounded with a consoling regularity. I wished to examine the camériste; but she had resumed the mask which she had doubtless taken off during the ride, and I could see only two black eyes and agreeably accented forms. The lover immediately threw some napkins on the legs of his mistress and folded in double across her face the veil of muslin. When I had carefully ob-

served this woman I recognized by certain symptoms, previously remarked under very sad circumstances of my life, that the child was dead. I leaned over quickly to the girl to inform her of this fact. At that moment the suspicious unknown drew his poniard; but I had time to say everything to the femme de chambre, who whispered two words to him hastily. On hearing my decision, the lover experienced a slight shiver, which passed through him from his feet to his head like a flash; it seemed to me that I could see his face turn pale under his mask of black velvet. The caméristе seized a moment when this despairing man was looking at the dying woman, who had turned violet, and showed me on a table, glasses of lemonade already prepared, making me a negative sign. I comprehended that it would be necessary for me to abstain from drinking, notwithstanding the horrible heat which was parching my throat. The lover was thirsty, he took an empty glass, filled it with lemonade and drank. At that moment the lady had a violent convulsion which announced to me that the favorable moment for the operation had arrived. I summoned my courage, and I was able, after an hour's labor, to extract the infant by pieces. The Spaniard no longer thought of poisoning me when he comprehended that I had succeeded in saving his mistress. Great tears rolled momentarily down his cloak. The wife did not utter a cry, but she shuddered like a wild beast surprised, and sweated in great drops. In one horribly critical moment she made a gesture

to indicate her husband's chamber,—the husband had turned over in bed; of we four, she only had heard the moving of the draperies, the rustling of the bed or the curtains. We stopped, and through the eye-holes of their masks the lover and the camériste exchanged glances of fire, as though they said to each other: *Shall we kill him if he awakens?* I extended my hand then to take the glass of lemonade from which the unknown had drunk. The Spaniard thought that I was going to drink one of the full glasses, he leaped like a cat, laid his long poniard over the two poisoned glasses, and left me his own, making me a sign to drink the rest of it. There were so many ideas, so much feeling, in this sign and in his quick movement, that I forgave him the atrocious combinations which he had meditated, to kill me and thus bury all memory of this event. After two hours of cares and of fears, the camériste and I put her mistress back in bed. This man, who had embarked in so adventurous an enterprise, had put some diamonds in a paper in preparation for a flight,—he thrust them, unknown to me, into my pocket. As a parenthesis, as I was ignorant of the Spaniard's sumptuous gift, my servant stole this treasure from me the next day but one, and fled, securing a veritable fortune. I whispered into the ear of the femme de chambre the precautions which remained to be taken, and I wished to decamp. The camériste remained by the side of her mistress, a circumstance which did not reassure me excessively; but I resolved to keep myself on my guard.

The lover made a package of the dead infant and of the linen in which the femme de chambre had received her mistress's blood; he tied it tightly, concealed it under his cloak, passed his hand over my eyes as if to tell me to close them, and went out the first, inviting me by a gesture to hold on to a fold of his coat. I obeyed, not without casting a last glance at my mistress by chance. The caméristе snatched off her mask when she saw the Spaniard outside, and showed me the most delicious face in the world. When I found myself in the garden, in the open air, I admit that I drew in my breath as if an enormous weight had been removed from my chest. I walked at a respectful distance from my guide, watching his slightest movements with the greatest attention. When we came to the little gate, he took me by the hand, pressed against my lips a seal mounted as a ring which I had seen on a finger of his left hand, and I made him understand that I comprehended this eloquent sign. We found ourselves in the street, where two horses were waiting for us; we each mounted one, my Spaniard took my bridle, which he held in his left hand, took between his teeth his own, for he had his bloody package in his right hand, and we set off with the rapidity of a flash. It was impossible for me to notice the least object which could serve to enable me to recognize the route we were traversing. In the early dawn I found myself near my door, and the Spaniard disappeared in the direction of the Porte d'Atocha.'"

"'And you perceived nothing that could give you

any idea with what woman you had had your affair?' said the colonel to the surgeon.

"'One thing only,' he replied. 'When I arranged the unknown lady I noticed on her arm, near the middle, a little mark, as large as a lentil, and surrounded by brown hairs.'

"'At this moment the indiscreet surgeon suddenly turned pale; all eyes, fixed on his, followed their direction,—we then saw a Spaniard with a glittering eye, in a little tuft of orange trees. When he perceived that our attention was turned to him, this man disappeared with the lightness of a sylph. A captain immediately started in pursuit of him.

"'*Sarpejeu!* my friends!' cried the surgeon, 'that basilisk's eye has chilled me. I hear the knell tolling in my ears! Receive my last farewells, you will bury me here!'

"'What an ass you are!' said Colonel Hulot. 'Falcon is on the track of the Spaniard who was listening to us, he will bring him to an account.'

"'Well?' exclaimed the officers on seeing the captain return out of breath.

"'The devil!' replied Falcon, 'he went through the walls, I think. As I do not believe that he is a sorcerer, he doubtless is of the household! he is acquainted with the passages, the turnings, and easily escaped from me.'

"'I am lost!' said the surgeon in a sombre voice.

"'Come now, be easy, Béga,'—his name was Béga,—I said to him, 'we will take up our lodgings

in turn with you until your departure. This evening we will accompany you.'

"In fact, three young officers who had lost their money at cards reconducted the surgeon to his lodging, and one of us offered to stay with him. The next day but one Béga had obtained his leave to return to France, he made all his preparations to depart with a lady to whom Murat was giving a strong escort; he was just finishing dinner in company with his friends when his servant came to tell him that a young lady wished to speak with him. The surgeon and the three officers descended at once, fearing some plot. The unknown could only say to her lover: 'Take care!' and fell dead. This woman was the caméristé, who, feeling herself poisoned, had hoped to arrive in time to save the surgeon.

"'The devil! the devil!' cried Captain Falcon, 'that is what you might call loving! A Spanish woman is the only one in the world who can trot about with a load of poison in her bottle.'

"Béga remained singularly thoughtful. To drown the sinister presentiments which tormented him, he took his seat at the table again and drank immoderately, as did his companions. All of them, half drunk, retired early. In the middle of the night the poor Béga was awakened by the sharp noise made by the rings of his bed curtains suddenly sliding on their rods. He sat up in bed, a prey to that mechanical trepidation which seizes us at the moment of such an awakening. He then saw, standing

before him, a Spaniard enveloped in his mantle, who threw upon him the same fiery look that he had seen in the orange trees during the fête. Béga cried:

"'Help! help! my friends!'

"To this cry of distress the Spaniard replied by a bitter laugh.

"'Opium grows for all the world,' he murmured.

"This species of sentence pronounced, the unknown showed the three friends sleeping profoundly, drew from under his mantle a woman's arm recently severed, presented it suddenly to Béga, making him see upon it a sign similar to that which he had so imprudently described:

"'Is it indeed the same?' he asked him.

"By the light of a lantern placed upon the bed, Béga recognized the arm and replied only by his stupefaction. Without any further information the husband of the unknown plunged his poniard into his heart—"

"You ought to relate that to the charcoal-burners," said the journalist, "for it would require their robust faith to believe it.* Would you kindly explain to me who, the dead man or the Spaniard, told the story?"

"Monsieur," replied the receiver of taxes, "I nursed the poor Béga, who died five days later in horrible suffering. This is not all. At the time of the expedition undertaken to re-establish Ferdinand VII., I was appointed to a post in Spain, and,

* *La foi du charbonnier*, an implicit faith.

very fortunately, I went no farther than Tours, for I was then led to hope that I might receive the appointment of receiver in Sancerre. The evening before my departure I was at a ball given by Madame de Listomère where there were to be several distinguished Spaniards. As I left the écarté table I saw a grandee of Spain, an *afrancesado* in exile, who had arrived two weeks before in Touraine. He had come very late to this ball, where he made his first appearance in society, and traversed the salons accompanied by his wife, whose right arm remained absolutely immovable. We made way in silence to allow to pass this couple whom we contemplated not without emotion. Imagine a living picture by Murillo! In the depths of hollow and dark orbits, the man showed fiery eyes which remained fixed; his face was dried, his skull without hair presented ruddy tints and his body was frightful to see, it was so thin. The wife! imagine her!— no, you could not see her truly. She had that admirable figure which has given rise to the word *meneho* in the Spanish language; although pale, she was still beautiful; her complexion, by an unheard-of privilege for a Spanish woman, was dazzlingly fair; but her glance, full of the sunshine of Spain, fell upon you like a jet of molten lead. 'Madame,' I asked her, toward the end of the evening, 'by what accident did you lose your arm?' 'In the war of independence,' she replied."

"Spain is a singular country," said Madame de la Baudraye, "there are some traces of Arab manners remaining there yet."

"Oh!" said the journalist, laughing, "this mania for cutting off arms is very old, it reappears at certain epochs like some of our *canards* in the journals, for this subject had already furnished dramas for the Spanish stage, from 1570—"

"Do you then think me capable of inventing a story?" said Monsieur Gravier, vexed at Lousteau's impertinent air.

"You are incapable of it," replied the journalist meaningly.

"Bah!" said Bianchon, "the inventions of the romancers and of the feeble dramatists as often leap out of their books and their pieces into real life as the events of real life mount upon the stage and strut in the books. I have seen realized under my own eyes the comedy of *Tartuffe*, with the exception of the dénouement,—never could Orgon's eyes be opened."

"And the tragi-comedy of *Adolphe*, by Benjamin Constant, is played every hour," exclaimed Lousteau.

"Do you think that there could still happen in France, adventures like that which Monsieur Gravier has just related to us?" said Madame de la Baudraye.

"Eh! *Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed the procureur du roi, "of *the ten or twelve remarkable crimes* which are committed every year in France, there are half of them of which the circumstances are at least as extraordinary as those of your adventures, and they very frequently surpass them in romantic qualities. This fact is surely, moreover, proved by the publica-

tion of the *Gazette des Tribunaux*, in my opinion one of the greatest abuses of the press. This journal, which only dates from 1826 or 1827, was therefore not in existence when I made my début in the career of public officer, and the details of the crime which I am going to relate were not known outside of the department where they were *perpetrated*. In the faubourg of Saint-Pierre-des-Corps, at Tours, a woman, whose husband had disappeared at the time of the disbanding of the Army of the Loire in 1816 and had naturally been much wept, made herself remarkable by an excessive devotion. When the missionaries traversed the cities of the provinces to set up again the crosses that had been thrown down and efface all the traces of the revolutionary impieties, this widow was one of the most ardent proselytes, she carried the cross, she nailed to it her heart in silver pierced by a dart, and, for a long time after the mission, she went every evening to say her prayers at the foot of the cross which was set up behind the apse of the cathedral. Finally, overcome by her remorse, she confessed a frightful crime. She had slaughtered her husband as Fualdès was slaughtered, by bleeding him to death, she had salted him down, put him in two old puncheons, in pieces, exactly as she would have done a pig. And for a long time, every morning she had cut off a piece and taken and thrown it into the Loire. The confessor consulted his superiors and notified the penitent that he should inform the procureur du roi. The woman waited for the descent of justice. The procureur du roi and

the juge d'instruction visiting the cellar, found the head of the husband still there in the salt, in one of the puncheons. 'But, unhappy woman,' said the juge d'instruction to the accused, 'since you have had the barbarity to throw into the river in this manner your husband's body, why did you not make the head disappear also? There would then no longer have been any proof'—'I have often tried to do so, monsieur,' she replied; 'but I always found it too heavy.'"

"Well, what did they do with the woman?—" cried the two Parisians.

"She was condemned and executed at Tours," replied the magistrate; "but her repentance and her religious faith in the end attracted an interest in her, despite the enormity of her crime."

"Ah! does any one know," said Bianchon, "all the tragedies which take place behind the curtain of the household, which the public never raises? It seems to me that human justice is not well contrived to judge of crimes between husband and wife; it has every right as police, but it has no understanding there in its pretensions to equity."

"Very frequently the victim has been so long the executioner," replied Madame de la Baudraye naïvely, "that the crime would sometimes appear excusable if the accused dared to say all."

This response, drawn out by Bianchon, and the story related by the procureur du roi threw the two Parisians into a state of great perplexity concerning Dinah's true situation. Thus, when the hour for

retiring arrived, there was held one of those conventicles which take place in the corridors of those old châteaux when the young men all remain, their candles in their hands, talking mysteriously. Monsieur Gravier then learned the object of this amusing evening, in which the innocence of Madame de la Baudraye had been set forth.

"After all," said Lousteau, "the impassiveness of our châtelaine might indicate as well a profound depravity as the most infantile candor.—The procureur du roi had the air, to me, of proposing to make the little La Baudraye into a salad—"

"He does not return till to-morrow; who knows what will happen to-night?" said Gatien.

"We will know," cried Monsieur Gravier.

Life in a château includes an infinite number of bad jests, among which there are some that are horribly perfidious. Monsieur Gravier, who had seen so many things, proposed to put seals on the doors of the rooms of Madame de la Baudraye and of the procureur du roi. The accusing cranes of the murdered poet Ibycus were nothing in comparison with the hair which the spies of the château fixed on the opening of the door by two little flattened balls of wax, placed so low or so high that it was impossible to suspect this trap. Should the gallant come out and open the other suspected door, the coincidence of the two broken hairs would reveal all. When everyone was thought to be asleep, the doctor, the journalist, the receiver of taxes and Gatien came barefooted, like real thieves, to condemn mysteri-

ously the two doors, and promised themselves to come at five o'clock in the morning to verify the state of the seals. Judge of their astonishment and of the pleasure of Gatien when all four, candle in hand, half-clad, came to examine the hairs and found that of the procureur du roi and that of Madame de la Baudraye in a satisfactory state of preservation.

"Is it the same wax?" asked Monsieur Gravier.

"Is it the same hair?" asked Lousteau.

"Yes," said Gatien.

"That changes everything," exclaimed Lousteau, "you have beaten the bushes for *Robin des bois*."

The receiver of taxes and the president's son looked at each other with an interrogating glance which seemed to say: "Is there not something in this phrase which is meant for us? should we laugh or get angry?"

"If Dinah is virtuous," said the journalist in Bianchon's ear, "it would be well worth the trouble that I should gather the fruit of her first love."

The idea of carrying in a few moments a fortified place that had resisted the Sancerrois for nine years pleased Lousteau. With this thought in his mind he descended the first into the garden, hoping to meet the châtelaine there. This chance came to pass all the more readily that Madame de la Baudraye had also the desire to have an interview with her critic. The greater number of chances are sought for.

"Yesterday, you hunted, monsieur," said Ma-

dame de la Baudraye. "This morning I am sufficiently embarrassed to find a new amusement to offer you; unless you should be willing to come to La Baudraye, where you could study the province a little better than here, for you made but one mouthful of my absurdities; but the proverb concerning the most beautiful maid in the world applies also to the poor woman of the provinces."

"That little fool of a Gatien," replied Lousteau, "doubtless repeated to you a phrase which I had made use of in order to get him to admit that he adored you. Your silence, on the day before yesterday, both during the dinner and during the whole evening, revealed to me with sufficient clearness one of those indiscretions which are never committed in Paris. What would you have! I do not flatter myself that I am always easy to be understood. Thus, I plotted to have all those stories told yesterday evening solely for the purpose of knowing if we should cause you, you and Monsieur de Clagny, some remorse—Oh! reassure yourself, we are certain of your innocence. If you had had the least weakness for that virtuous magistrate, you would have lost all your value in my eyes—I love that which is complete. You do not love, you cannot love that cold, that little, that dried-up, that dumb usurer in puncheons and lands who has planted you here for the sake of the twenty-five centimes to be made on the second crops! Oh! I have quite recognized the identity of Monsieur de la Baudraye with our discounters of Paris,—it is the same nature.

Twenty-eight years of age, beautiful, wise, childless—indeed, madame, I have never seen the problem of virtue better presented.—The author of *Paquita la Sévillane* must have dreamed many dreams!—I can speak to you of all these things without the hypocrisy of words which the young people put in them, I am old before my time. I have no longer any illusions; are there any preserved in the trade which I have followed?—"

In beginning thus, Lousteau suppressed the entire chart of the country of Tenderness, in which the true passions make such long patrols, he went straight to the object by putting himself in a position to offer that which the women cause to be asked of them for years,—witness the poor procureur du roi, for whom the utmost favor consisted in pressing a little more *carnally* than usual, the arm of Dinah against his heart in walking with her, the happy man! Thus, not to give the lie to her renown as a superior woman, did Madame de la Baudraye endeavor to console the Manfred of the feuilleton by prophesying to him a whole future of love of which he had not dreamed.

"You have sought for pleasure, but you have not yet loved," said she. "Believe me, true love often comes when life is most feeble. Look at Monsieur de Gentz falling in love with Fanny Ellsler in his old age, and forsaking the revolutions of July for the rehearsals of this dancer!"

"That seems difficult to me," replied Lousteau. "I believe in love, but I do not believe in woman.—

There are doubtless in me defects which forbid my being loved, for I have often been forsaken. Perhaps have I too much the sentiment of the ideal—like all those who have digged into reality.—"

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Madame de la Baudraye heard at last the speech of a man who, thrown into the midst of the most brilliant Parisian world, brought with him its most daring axioms, its almost ingenuous depravations, its advanced convictions, and who, if he were not superior, at least pretended to be superior very well. Étienne had with Dinah all the success of a first representation. Paquita la Sancerroise inhaled the tempests of Paris, the air of Paris. She passed one of the most agreeable days of her entire life between Étienne and Bianchon, who related to her the curious anecdotes concerning the great men of the day, the flights of wit which will be some day the *ana* of our century; words and things common in Paris, but entirely new to her. Naturally Lousteau said much that was evil of the great feminine celebrity of Berri, but with the evident intention of flattering Madame de la Baudraye and of enticing her upon the ground of literary confidences in causing her to consider this writer as her rival. This praise intoxicated Madame de la Baudraye, who appeared to Monsieur de Clagny, to the receiver of taxes and to Gatien to be more affectionate with Étienne than on

the evening before. These lovers of Dinah regretted much to have all of them to go back to Sancerre, where they loudly advertised the evening at Anzy. Never, according to them, had such wit been uttered. The hours had flown away without anyone being able to perceive their light feet. The two Parisians were celebrated by them as two prodigies. These exaggerations trumpeted upon the Mail had for effect to bring sixteen persons in the evening to the Château d'Anzy, some in family cabriolets, some in char à bancs, and a few celibates upon hired horses. About seven o'clock, these provincials made, more or less well, their entry into the immense salon of Anzy, which Dinah, forewarned of this invasion, had brilliantly lit up, and to which she had given all its splendor by taking off the gray wrappings from its fine furniture, for she regarded this soirée as one of her great days. Lousteau, Bianchon and Dinah exchanged glances of mutual intelligence in watching the attitudes, in listening to the phrases of these visitors allured by curiosity. How many invalided ribbons, hereditary laces, old flowers more artful than artificial presented themselves audaciously on their biennial caps. The wife of the president Boirouge, a cousin of Bianchon, exchanged a few phrases with the doctor, from whom she obtained a gratuitous consultation by explaining to him some pretended nervous troubles in the stomach, in which he recognized periodic indigestion.

"Merely take some tea every day, an hour after your dinner, like the English, and you will be cured,

for that which you experience is an English affection," replied Bianchon gravely.

"He is decidedly a very great physician," said the president's wife, returning to Madame de Clagny, to Madame Popinot-Chandier and to Madame Gorju, the wife of the mayor.

"It is said," replied Madame de Clagny under her fan, "that Dinah had him come much less for the elections than to learn the cause of her sterility—"

In the first moments of their success, Lousteau presented the learned physician as the only candidate possible at the coming elections. But Bianchon, to the great contentment of the new sous-préfet, observed that it appeared to him to be almost impossible to abandon science for politics.

"There are," said he, "only the doctors without patients who can get themselves named as deputies. Nominate then the statesmen, the thinkers, the men whose acquaintance is universal, who know how to place themselves at the height at which a legislator should stand,—that is what is lacking in our two Chambers, and what is necessary for our country!"

Two or three young girls, some young men and their wives, examined Lousteau as though he were a sleight-of-hand performer.

"Monsieur Gatien Boirouge pretends that Monsieur Lousteau makes twenty thousand francs a year by writing," said the wife of the mayor to Madame de Clagny, "do you believe it?"

"Is it possible, for they only pay a thousand écus to a procureur du roi—"

"Monsieur Gatien," said Madame Chandier, "do make Monsieur Lousteau speak aloud. I have not yet heard him—"

"What beautiful boots he has!" said Mademoiselle Chandier to her brother, "and how they shine!"

"Bah! that is varnish."

"Why don't you have some?"

Lousteau ended by discovering that he was *posing* too much, and recognized in the attitude of the Sancerrois the indications of the desire which had brought them.

"What could we do for them?" he thought.

At this moment the pretended valet de chambre of Monsieur de la Baudraye, a farm servant dressed in a livery, brought in the letters, the journals, and handed a package of proofs which the journalist allowed Bianchon to take, for Madame de la Baudraye said to him on seeing the package, the shape and the cords of which were sufficiently typographic:

"What! literature pursues you even here?"

"Not literature," he replied, "but the review in which I am finishing a novel, and which appears in ten days. I have come to the point of *To be concluded in our next*, and I was obliged to give my address to the printer. Ah! we eat a bread sold to us very dearly by the speculators in inked paper! I should describe to you that curious species, the directors of reviews."

"When will the conversation commence?" said Madame de Clagny to Dinah, just as one would ask: "When do the fireworks begin?"

"I thought," said Madame Popinot-Chandier to her cousin, the wife of the president Boirouge, "that we should have some stories."

At this moment when, as from impatient orchestra chairs, the murmurs of the Sancerrois began to be heard, Lousteau saw Bianchon lost in thought inspired by the envelope of the proofs.

"What have you there?" said Étienne to him.

"Why here is the prettiest story in the world contained in a waste printed sheet which covers your proofs. See, read: *Olympia, or the Roman Vengeances.*"

"Let us see," said Lousteau, taking the piece of the waste sheet which the doctor handed him, and reading aloud this:

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cavern. Rinaldo, indignant at the cowardice of his companions, who were brave only in the open air and dared not venture into Rome, threw upon them a glance of scorn.

"I am then alone?—" he said to them.

He appeared to reflect, then he resumed:

"You are cowards! I will go alone, and I alone shall have this rich prey.—You hear me!—Adieu."

"O, Captain!—" said Lamberti, "if you should be taken without having succeeded?—"

"God will protect me!—" replied Rinaldo, pointing to Heaven.

At these words, he went out hastily and encountered on the road the intendant of Bracciano

"The page is ended," said Lousteau, to whom everybody had listened religiously.

"He is reading us his work," said Gatien to the son of Madame Popinot-Chandier.

"From the first words it is evident, mesdames," said the journalist, seizing the occasion to mystify the Sancerrois, "that the brigands are in a cavern. How carelessly the romancers then treated the details, which to-day are so curiously, so lengthily observed under the pretext of local color! If the robbers are in a cavern, instead of *pointing to Heaven,* it should have been, *pointed to the vault.* Notwithstanding this incorrection, Rinaldo seems to me to be a man of execution, and his apostrophe to God smells of Italy. There was in this romance a suspicion of local color. Peste! brigands, a cavern, a Lamberti who calculates.—I see a whole vaudeville in that page. Add to these first elements a bit of intrigue, a young peasant girl with her hair turned up, with short petticoats, and a hundred detestable couplets.—Oh, good Lord! how the public would come. And then Rinaldo—how well that name would suit Lafont! In supposing him to have black whiskers, tight pantaloons, a cloak, moustaches, a pistol and a pointed hat; if the director of the Vaudeville has the courage to pay for a few notices in the journals, there are fifty representations secured for the Vaudeville and six thousand francs of royalty for the author if I am willing to speak well of the piece in my feuilleton. We will continue:

The Duchesse de Bracciano had found her glove again. Certainly, Adolphe, who had brought her back to the orange grove, might think that there was some coquetry in this forgetfulness, for then the grove was deserted. The noise of the fête was heard vaguely in the distance. The *fantoccini* announced had drawn all the guests into the gallery. Never had Olympia appeared more beautiful to her lover. Their glances, animated by the same fire, comprehended each other. There was a moment of silence delicious for their souls, and impossible to depict. They seated themselves on the same bench where they had found themselves in the presence of the Chevalier de Paluzzi and of the mocking jesters

"*Malepeste!* I see no more of our Rinaldo," exclaimed Lousteau. "But what progress in the understanding of the intrigue would not a literary man make at a gallop over this page? The Duchess Olympia is a woman *who could forget designedly her gloves in a deserted grove!*"

"Unless placed between the oyster and the under-head-clerk in an office, the two creations having the greatest resemblance to marble in the zoological kingdom, it is impossible not to recognize in Olympia—" said Bianchon.

"*A woman of thirty!*" said Madame de la Baudraye quickly, fearing a too-medical epithet.

"Adolphe then is twenty-two," replied the doctor, "for an Italian woman of thirty is like a Parisienne of forty."

"With these two suppositions the romance can be reconstructed," resumed Lousteau. "And this

Chevalier de Paluzzi, what do you think of him ?— what a man ! In these two pages the style is feeble, the author was perhaps an employé of the bureau of indirect taxes, he wrote the romance to pay his tailor."

"There was a censure at that time," said Bianchon, "and we should be as indulgent for the man who passed under the scissors of 1805 as for those who went to the scaffold in 1793."

"Do you understand anything of it ?" timidly asked Madame Gorju, the mayor's wife, of Madame de Clagny.

The wife of the procureur du roi, who, according to Monsieur Gravier's expression, would have put to flight a young Cossack in 1814, settled herself on her haunches like a horseman in his stirrups and pursed her mouth at her neighbor as if to say : "We are looked at ! let us smile as if we understood."

"It is charming !" said the mayor's wife to Gatien. "Please, Monsieur Lousteau, continue !"

Lousteau looked at the two women, two real Indian idols, and was able to preserve his gravity. He thought it necessary to cry : "Attention !" as he thus resumed :

dress rustled in the silence. Suddenly the Cardinal Borborigano appeared before the eyes of the duchess. His countenance was sombre, his forehead seemed clouded, and a bitter smile designed itself upon his lips.

"Madame," he said, "you are suspected. If you are guilty, fly! if you are not, fly anyhow, because, virtuous or criminal, you will be much better able to defend yourself at a distance—"

"I thank your Eminence for your solicitude," she said; "the Duc de Bracciano will reappear when it shall seem to me necessary to show that he still exists."

"The Cardinal Borborigano!" cried Bianchon. "By the keys of the Pope! if you do not agree with me that there is to be found a magnificent creation solely in the name, if you do not see in these words *dress rustled in the silence!* all the poetry of the rôle of *Schedoni* invented by Madame Radcliffe in *The Confessional of the Black Penitents,* you are unworthy to read romances."

"For my part," said Dinah, who was moved to pity for the eighteen countenances which regarded the two Parisians, "I can see the story go on. I understand it all,—I am in Rome, I see the body of the assassinated husband whose wife, audacious and perverted, has set up her bed over a volcano. Every night, at every pleasure, she says to herself: 'Everything will now be discovered!'"

"Do you see her?" cried Lousteau, "embracing this Monsieur Adolphe? She clasps him tightly, she wishes to put all her life into one kiss!—Adolphe seems to me to be an irreproachable young man, but one without spirit, one of those young people such as they require at the Italiennes. Rinaldo hovers over the intrigue with which we are not acquainted, but which should be as full-bodied

as that of a melodrama by Pixérécourt. We can imagine, moreover, that Rinaldo passes at the back of the theatre, like a personage in one of Victor Hugo's dramas."

"And he is the husband perhaps," cried Madame de la Baudraye.

"Do you understand anything of all that?" asked Madame Piédefer of the president's wife.

"It is charming," said Madame de la Baudraye to her mother.

All the natives of Sancerre opened their eyes wide, like hundred-sous pieces.

"Continue, please," said Madame de la Baudraye.

Lousteau continued:

> 210 OLYMPIA,
>
> "Your key!—"
> "Have you lost it?"
> "It is in the grove—"
> "Let us run—"
> "Could the cardinal have taken it?"
> "No.—Here it is—"
> "What a danger we have escaped!"
> Olympia looked at the key, she thought she recognized her own; but Rinaldo had changed it; his stratagem had succeeded, he possessed the real key. A modern Cartouche, he had as much skilfulness as courage, and suspecting that only the possession of considerable treasures could oblige a duchess to carry it always at her girdle

"Look!—" exclaimed Lousteau. "The page which constitutes the following recto is not here,

there is nothing to relieve us of our anxiety but page 212:

212 OLYMPIA,

"If the key had been lost!"

"He would be dead—"

"Dead! would you not grant the last prayer which he addressed to you, and give him liberty on the conditions that he—"

"You do not know him—"

"But—"

"Be still. I have taken you for a lover and not for a confessor."

Adolphe became silent.

"Then here is a Love mounted on a she-goat that gallops, a vignette designed by *Normand,* engraved by *Duplat*— Oh! the names are here," said Lousteau.

"Well, what is the end of it?" said those of the auditors who understood.

"But the chapter is ended," replied Lousteau. "The circumstance of the vignette changes completely my opinions concerning the author. In order to have obtained, under the Empire, vignettes engraved on wood, the author must have been a Councillor of State, or Madame Barthélemy-Hadot, the late Desforges or Sewrin."

"*Adolphe became silent!*— Ah!" said Bianchon, "the duchess is less than thirty."

"If there is no more, invent an ending!" said Madame de la Baudraye.

"But," said Lousteau, "the waste sheet has been printed only on one side. In the manner of

printing, the *second* side, or, to make you understand better, see, the reverse which should have been printed, has in fact received an incommensurable number of separate impressions, it belongs to that class of sheets known as *making ready*. As it would be horribly long to instruct you in what consists the irregularity of a *making ready* sheet, know that it can no more preserve the impression of the first twelve pages which the pressmen have printed on it than you could keep any remembrance whatever of the first blow with the stick which you had received if some pacha had condemned you to receive a hundred and fifty on the soles of the feet."

"I am going crazy," said Madame Popinot-Chandier to Monsieur Gravier; "I am trying to explain to myself the Councillor of State, the cardinal, the key and this waste sheet—"

"You have not the key to this jest," said Monsieur Gravier; "well, neither have I, fair lady, reassure yourself."

"But there is another sheet," said Bianchon, who looked at the table on which the proofs lay.

"Good!" said Lousteau, "it is whole and entire! It is signed IV.; J. *2d edition*. Ladies, the IV. indicates the fourth volume. The J, tenth letter of the alphabet, the tenth sheet. It appears to me to be proven from this that this romance in four volumes in 12mo, barring tricks of the publishers, must have been successful, since there have been two editions. Let us read and decipher this enigma:

corridor; but feeling that he was pursued by the attendants of the duchess, Rinaldo

"Go on!"

"Oh!" said Madame de la Baudraye, "there have been important events between your piece of the waste sheet and this page."

"Say rather, madame, this precious *good sheet!* But did that waste sheet in which the duchess forgot her gloves in the grove belong to the fourth volume? Oh! the devil! let us continue:"

could think of no asylum more secure than to descend immediately into the subterranean crypts in which should be contained the treasures of the house of Bracciano. Light of foot as the Camille of the Latin poet, he fled toward the mysterious entrance of the baths of Vespasian. Already the torches were lighting the walls when the adroit Rinaldo, discovering, with the perspicacity with which nature had endowed him, the door hidden in the wall, promptly disappeared. A horrible thought lit up the soul of Rinaldo, like the lightning flash when it rends the clouds asunder. He was imprisoned!— He felt along the

"Oh! this good sheet is the piece of the waste sheet which follows! The last page of the piece is 212, and we have here 217! And, in fact, if in the waste sheet, Rinaldo, who has stolen the key of the duchess's treasures by substituting another very like it, finds himself, in this good sheet, in the palace of the Ducs de Bracciano, the romance appears to me to be drawing toward some conclusion or other. I hope this is as clear to you as it has

become to me— For me, the fête is over, the two lovers have returned to the palace Bracciano, it is night, it is one o'clock in the morning. Rinaldo is going to make a good stroke!"

"And Adolphe?—" said the president Boirouge, who had the reputation of being somewhat quick in repartee.

"And what literary style!" said Bianchon,— *Rinaldo who found the asylum to descend!*

"Evidently neither Maradan, nor the Treuttels and Wurtz, nor Doguereau printed this romance," said Lousteau; "for they had in their pay proof-readers who corrected their proofs, a luxury which our present publishers should certainly give themselves, the authors of to-day would be marvellously well suited by it. That must have been some small job-printer of the Quai—"

"What Quai?" said a lady to her neighbor. "They were speaking of baths.—"

"Go on," said Madame de la Baudraye.

"In any case, it is not by a Councillor of State," said Bianchon.

"It is perhaps by Madame Hadot," said Lousteau.

"Why do they drag in Madame Hadot of La Charité?" asked the president's wife of her son.

"This Madame Hadot, my dear Madame Présidente," replied the châtelaine, "was a female author who lived under the Consulate—"

"Women wrote, then, under the Emperor?" asked Madame Popinot-Chandier.

"And Madame de Genlis? and Madame de

Staël ?" said the procureur du roi, piqued for Dinah's sake, at this observation.

"Ah!"

"Go on, please," said Madame de la Baudraye to Lousteau.

Lousteau resumed his reading, saying: "Page 218."

218 OLYMPIA,

wall with an anxious precipitation, and uttered a cry of despair when he had vainly sought for traces of the secret lock. It was impossible for him to refuse to recognize the frightful truth. The door, skilfully contrived to serve the vengeances of the duchess, could not be opened from the inside. Rinaldo pressed his cheek to several apertures and could feel nowhere the warm air of the gallery. He hoped to find a crack which would indicate to him the place where the wall ended, but, nothing, nothing!—the partition seemed to be a solid block of marble.—

Then, there escaped from him the dull growling of a hyena . . . . . .

"Well, we thought we had recently invented the cries of the hyena!" said Lousteau; "the literature of the Empire was already acquainted with them, even brought them into action with a certain talent in natural history, which is proved by the word *dull.*"

"Do not make any reflections, monsieur," said Madame de la Baudraye.

"Oh! there you are!" cried Bianchon, "the *interest,* that monster of romances, has put its hand on your collar, as it did on mine just now."

"Read!" cried the procureur du roi, "I understand."

"The ass!" said the president in the ear of his neighbor, the sous-préfet.

"He wishes to flatter Madame de la Baudraye," replied the new sous-préfet.

"Well, I will read continuously," said Lousteau solemnly.

The journalist was listened to in the most profound silence:

A profound sigh replied to Rinaldo's cry; but, in his agitation, he took it for an echo, so very feeble and hollow was this sigh! it could not have issued from a human chest.—

"Santa Maria!" said the unknown.

"If I quit this place, I shall never be able to find it again!" thought Rinaldo when he had recovered his usual self-possession. "If I knock, I shall be detected. What is to be done?"

"Who is there?" asked the voice.

"Hein!" said the brigand, "do the toads speak here?"

"I am the Duc de Bracciano! Whoever you are,

if you do not belong to the duchess, come, in the name of all the saints, come to me!"

"It would be necessary to know where you are, monseigneur le duc," replied Rinaldo with the impertinence of a man who sees that he is necessary for something.

"I see you, my friend, for my eyes are accustomed to the obscurity. Listen, walk straight ahead of you. —Good.—Turn to the left—Come—here.—Now we are together."

Rinaldo, keeping his hands prudently outstretched in front of him, felt iron bars.

"I am deceived!" cried the bandit.

"No, you have only touched my cage.—Sit down on that marble shaft there."

"How can the Duc de Bracciano be in a cage?" asked the bandit.

"My friend, I have been standing up for thirty months, without being able to sit down.—But who are you?"

"I am Rinaldo, the prince of the Campagna, the chief of eighty brave men, whom the laws wrongly call scoundrels, whom all ladies admire, and whom the judges hang through force of habit."

"God be praised!—I am saved.—An honest man would have been afraid, whilst I am certain of being

able to come to a very good understanding with you," exclaimed the duke. "Oh, my dear liberator, you must be armed to the teeth.—"

"*E verissimo!*"

"Have you some?—"

"Yes, files, pincers.—*Corpo di Bacco!* I came to borrow indefinitely the treasures of the Bracciani."

"You will have, legitimately, a good share, my dear Rinaldo, and perhaps I shall go and hunt men in your company.—"

"You surprise me, Excellence!—"

"Listen to me, Rinaldo! I will not speak to you of the desire for vengeance which gnaws at my

heart; I have been here for thirty months—you are Italian?—you will comprehend me! Ah! my friend, my fatigue and my frightful captivity are nothing in comparison with the evil which devours my heart. The Duchesse de Bracciano is still one of the most beautiful women in Rome, I am sufficiently in love with her to be jealous of her.—"

"You, her husband!—"

"Yes, I was wrong, perhaps?"

"Certainly, that is not usual," said Rinaldo.

"My jealousy was excited by the conduct of the duchess," resumed the duke. "The result has proved that I was right. A young Frenchman loved

"A thousand pardons! ladies," said Lousteau; "but, do you see, it is impossible for me not to call your attention to the fact that the literature of the Empire went straight to the fact without any details, which seems to me to be one of the characteristics of primitive times. The literature of that epoch held the middle position between the summary of the chapters of *Télémaque* and the requisitions of the public ministry. It had ideas, but it did not express them, the scornful one! It observed, but it did not communicate its observations to anyone, the miser! There was only Fouché who communicated his observations to anyone. *Literature then contented itself*, according to the expression of one of the most idiotic critics of the *Revue des Deux Mondes, with a sufficiently pure sketch and with a very well defined contour of all the figures in the antique manner; it did not dance upon the periods!* I can very well believe it, it had no periods, it had no words to change color according to the varying aspects of things; it said to you: 'Lubin loved Toinette, Toinette did not love Lubin; Lubin killed Toinette, and the gendarmes took Lubin, who was put in prison, tried before the court of assizes and guillotined.' A strong sketch, a well defined contour! What a fine drama! Well, to-day, the barbarians make the words—*les mots*—change color at different times."

"And sometimes the dead—*les morts*—," said Monsieur de Clagny.

"Ah!" replied Lousteau, "you give yourself those R's?"

"What does he say?" asked Madame de Clagny, made uneasy by this pun.

"It seems to me that I am walking in a dark room," replied the mayor's wife.

"His joke would be lost if it were explained," observed Gatien.

"To-day," resumed Lousteau, "the romancers design the characters; and, instead of the well-defined contour, they unveil to you the human heart, they interest you, it may be in Toinette, it may be in Lubin."

"For my part, I am terrified at the education of the public in matters of literature," said Bianchon. "Like the Russians beaten by Charles XII. who ended by learning how to make war, the reader has ended by learning the art. Formerly, interest only was asked for in romance; as to the style, no one thought of it, not even the author; as to ideas, zero; as to local color, nothing. Insensibly the reader came to require style, interest, the pathetic, positive knowledge; he exacted the literary *five senses*,—invention, style, thought, knowledge, sentiment; then criticism came, to complete everything. The critic, incapable of inventing anything but calumnies, pretended that every work that did not emanate from a complete brain was halting. Some charlatans, like Walter Scott, who could unite the five

literary senses, then showed themselves ; those who had wit only, knowledge only, style only, or sentiment only, these limping ones, these acephalous, these maimed, these literary blind-of-an-eye, set themselves to crying that everything was lost, they preached crusades against those individuals who were spoiling the trade, and they denied their works."

"It is the history of your last literary quarrels," observed Dinah.

"For goodness' sake!" cried Monsieur de Clagny, "let us return to the Duc de Bracciano."

To the great despair of the assembly, Lousteau resumed the reading of the *good sheet:*

224 OLYMPIA,

Olympia, he was loved by her, I had proofs of their mutual affection.—

Then, I wished to assure myself of my misfortune, so that I might avenge myself under the wing of Providence and of the law. The duchess divined my projects. We combated each other in thought before we combated poison in hand. We wished mutually to inspire in each other a confidence which we did not feel,—I, to get her to drink, she, to get possession of me. She was a woman, she succeeded ; for the women have one more trap to set than we have, and I fell into it : I was happy ; but the next morning I woke up in this iron cage. I roared like

OR THE ROMAN VENGEANCES. 225

a lion during the whole of the day in the obscurity of this cave, which is situated under the bed-chamber of the duchess. In the evening, lifted by a counterweight skilfully managed, I was carried up through

the flooring and saw, in the arms of her lover, the duchess, who threw me a morsel of bread, my pittance every night. This has been my life for thirty months! In this prison of marble, my cries are unable to reach any ears. There is no chance for me. I no longer hope! In fact, the bed-chamber of the duchess is at the back of the palace, and my voice, when I ascend there, can be heard by no one. Every time that I see my wife, she shows me the

poison that I had prepared for her and for her lover; I ask it for myself, but she refuses me death, she gives me bread and I eat! I have done well to eat, to live, I had not counted upon the bandits!—"

"Yes, Excellence, when those imbeciles of honest people are asleep, we will watch, we—"

"Ah! Rinaldo, all my treasures are yours, we will divide them like brothers, and I would wish to give you all—even to my duchy—"

"Excellence! obtain for me from the Pope an absolution *in articulo mortis*, that would be worth more to me to rely upon."

"Whatever you like; but file the bars of my cage, and lend me your poniard.—We have scarcely time, work quickly.—Ah! if my teeth were only files.—I have endeavored to bite this iron.—"

"Excellence!" said Rinaldo, hearing the duke's last words, "I have already sawed through a bar."

"You are a god!"

"Your wife was at the fête of the Princess Villaviciosa; she has returned with her little Frenchman, she is intoxicated with love, we have then plenty of time."

"Have you finished?"

"Yes.—"

228 OLYMPIA,

"Your poniard!" asked the duke quickly of the bandit.

"Here it is."

"Good."

"I hear the noise of the spring."

"Do not forget me!" said the bandit, who was not unacquainted with gratitude.

"No more than my father," said the duke.

"Adieu!" said Rinaldo to him.—"Ha! how he flies up!" added the bandit as he saw the duke disappear. "*No more than his father*, did he say; if that is the way that he counts upon remembering me! Ah! I had however taken an oath never to injure women!—"

OR THE ROMAN VENGEANCES. 229

But let us leave for a moment the bandit to his reflections, and let us mount, like the duke, into the apartments of the palace.

"Here is another vignette, a Love mounted upon a snail! Then 230 is a blank page," said the journalist. "Here are two other blank pages taken up by this title, so delicious to write when one has the happy misfortune to make romances: *Conclusion!*"

CONCLUSION.

Never had the duchess been so pretty; she issued from her bath clothed like a goddess, and seeing Adolphe lying voluptuously on piles of cushions:

234 OLYMPIA,

"You are very beautiful," she said to him.

"And you, Olympia!—"

"You love me still?"

"Always better," he said.

"Ah! it is only the French who know how to love!" cried the duchess.—"Will you love me well to-night?"

"Yes."

"Come then!"

And, with a movement of hatred and of love, whether it were that the Cardinal Borborigano had more keenly reminded her of her husband, whether it were that she felt more love to display before him, she set off the spring and extended both her beautiful arms quickly toward

"That is all!" cried Lousteau, "for the foreman has torn the rest in wrapping up my proofs; but it is quite sufficient to prove to us that the author gave hopes."

"I do not understand anything about it," said Gatien Boirouge, who was the first to break the silence maintained by the Sancerrois.

"Nor I, either," replied Monsieur Gravier, exasperated.

"It is, however, a romance written under the Empire," said Lousteau to him.

"Oh!" said Monsieur Gravier, "from the manner in which the bandit is made to speak, it is evident that the author was not acquainted with Italy. The bandits do not allow themselves such *concetti.*"

Madame Gorju came to Bianchon, whom she saw to be thinking, and said, indicating to him Euphémie Gorju, her daughter, endowed with a sufficiently fine dot:

"What nonsense! The prescriptions that you write out are worth more than those things."

The mayor's wife had profoundly meditated this phrase which, as she thought, betrayed an intelligent mind.

"Ah! madame, we should be indulgent, for we

have only twenty pages out of a thousand," replied Bianchon, looking at Mademoiselle Gorju, whose figure threatened to change at the first child-birth.

"Well, Monsieur de Clagny," said Lousteau, "we were speaking yesterday of vengeances invented by the husbands, what do you say of those which the wives invent?"

"I think," replied the procureur du roi, "that the romance is not by a Councillor of State, but by a woman. In grotesque conceptions, the imagination of women goes farther than that of men, witness the *Frankenstein* of Mistress Shelley, *Leone Leoni,* the works of Anne Radcliffe, and *Le Nouveau Prométhée* of Camille Maupin."

Dinah looked fixedly at Monsieur de Clagny, making him comprehend, by an expression which froze him, that, notwithstanding so many illustrious examples, she took this reflection for *Paquita la Sévillane.*

"Bah!" said the little La Baudraye, "the Duc de Bracciano, whom his wife put in a cage and to whom she showed herself every night in the arms of her lover, is going to kill her.—You call that a vengeance?—Our tribunals and society are much more cruel.—"

"In what?" asked Lousteau.

"Well, see the little La Baudraye talking," said the president Boirouge to his wife.

"Why, the woman is allowed to live with a meagre allowance, the world then turns its back upon her; she has no longer either toilets or consid-

eration, two things which, it seems to me, are the whole woman," said the little old man.

"But she has happiness," replied Madame de la Baudraye pompously.

"No," replied the abortion, lighting his candle to go to bed, "for she has a lover—"

"For a man who thinks only of his vine-sprigs and his saplings, he has some sharpness," said Lousteau.

"It is necessary that he should have something," replied Bianchon.

Madame de la Baudraye, the only one who could understand Bianchon's speech, began to laugh so knowingly and so bitterly both at once, that the physician divined the secret of the inward life of the châtelaine, with whose premature wrinkles he had been preoccupied since the morning. But Dinah herself, did not in the least divine the sinister predictions which her husband had thrown out to her in a word, and which the late good Abbé Duret would not have failed to explain to her. The little La Baudraye had surprised in Dinah's eyes, when she looked at the journalist, tossing back to him the ball of quick repartee, that rapid and luminous tenderness which gilds a woman's glance at the moment when prudence ceases, or when impulse commences.

Dinah paid no attention to the invitation which her husband extended to her to observe the proprieties, no more than Lousteau had taken, as meant for him, the malicious opinions of Dinah on the day of his arrival.

Any other than Bianchon would have been surprised at Lousteau's prompt success; but he was not even offended at the preference which Dinah gave to the Feuilleton over the Faculty, so much was he a physician! In fact, Dinah, great herself, should have been more accessible to wit than to greatness. Love usually prefers contrasts to similitudes. The frankness and the good nature of the doctor, his profession, everything was against him. For this reason,—the women who wish to love, and Dinah wished as much to love as to be loved, have an instinctive horror of men devoted to tyrannical occupations; they are, notwithstanding their superior qualities, always women in the matter of encroachment. Poet and feuilletonist, the libertine Lousteau, set off by his misanthropy, offered that glitter of soul and that semi-indolent life which pleases women. The square-cut good sense, the perspicacious regard of the truly superior man, annoyed Dinah, who did not admit her smallness to herself; she said to herself:

"The doctor is perhaps worth more than the journalist, but he pleases me less."

Then she reflected upon the duties of the profession and asked herself if a woman could ever be anything more than a *subject* in the eyes of a physician, who sees so many *subjects* in the course of his day! The first proposition of the thought written by Bianchon in her album was the result of a medical observation which fell too directly upon woman for Dinah not to be struck by it. Finally, Bian-

chon, whose practice forbade him a longer sojourn, was going to leave on the morrow. What woman, unless she received in the heart the mythological shaft of Cupid, could decide in so short a time. Those little things, which produce the great catastrophes, once perceived in their entirety by Bianchon, he related to Lousteau in four words the singular decree which he had pronounced on Madame de la Baudraye and which caused the most lively surprise to the journalist. Whilst the two Parisians were whispering together, a storm against the châtelaine was rising among the Sancerrois, who had comprehended nothing of the paraphrase or of the commentaries of Lousteau. Far from perceiving in them the romance which the procureur du roi, the sous-préfet, the president, the first deputy Lebas, Monsieur de la Baudraye and Dinah had drawn from it, all the women grouped around the tea table saw in it only a mystification, and accused the muse of Sancerre of having had a hand in it. All of them had expected to pass a charming evening, all of them had uselessly made tense all the faculties of their minds. Nothing revolts the people of the provinces more than the idea of serving to amuse the people of Paris.

Madame Piédefer left the tea table to come to say to her daughter :

" Come now and talk to these ladies, they are very much shocked at your conduct."

Lousteau could not but notice at this moment the evident superiority of Dinah over the élite of the

women of Sancerre, she was better attired, her movements were full of grace, her skin took a delicious whiteness in the lights. She detached herself, in short, against this background of tapestry of old faces, of young girls badly dressed, with timid manners, like a queen in the midst of her court. The Parisian images effaced themselves, Lousteau lent himself to the life of the provinces; and, if he had too much imagination not to be impressed by the royal magnificence of this château, by its exquisite sculptures, by the antique beauties of the interior, he had also too much knowledge to be ignorant of the value of the furniture which enriched this jewel of the Renaissance. Thus, when the Sancerrois had retired one by one, conducted out by Dinah, for they all had an hour's journey before them; when there were present in the salon only the procureur du roi, Monsieur Lebas, Gatien and Monsieur Gravier, who were to sleep at Anzy, the journalist had already changed his opinion concerning Dinah. His mind evolved even this,—that Madame de la Baudraye had had the audacity to signalize him at their first meeting.

"Ah! how they are going to talk against us on the road!" exclaimed the châtelaine, re-entering the salon, after having put into their carriages the president, the president's wife, Madame and Mademoiselle Popinot-Chandier.

The remainder of the evening had its enjoyable side. In friendly converse, each one turned into the conversation his contingent of epigrams upon the

various countenances which the Sancerrois had taken on during Lousteau's commentaries upon the envelope of his proofs.

"My dear fellow," said Bianchon, as they retired, to Lousteau,—they had been put together into an immense chamber with two beds, "you will be the happy mortal chosen by that woman, née Piédefer!"

"You think so?"

"Eh! that can be explained,—you are believed here to have had a great many adventures in Paris, and, for the women, there is in the men of gallantry I know not what of irritating which attracts them and makes him agreeable to them; is it the vanity of wishing to erect their souvenirs triumphantly among all the others? do they address themselves to his experience, as a sick person overpays a celebrated physician? or are they indeed flattered to awaken a blasé heart?"

"The senses and vanity count for so much in love that all those suppositions may be true," replied Lousteau. "But, if I stay here, it is because of that certificate of learned innocence which you award Dinah! She is beautiful, is she not?"

"She would become charming in loving," said the doctor. "Then, after all, she will be, one day or another, a rich widow! And a child would be worth to her the enjoyment of the fortune of the lord of La Baudraye."

"Why, it is a good action, to love her, this woman!" exclaimed Lousteau.

"Once a mother, she would regain her plumpness, the wrinkles would disappear, she would appear to be only twenty years old—"

"Well," said Lousteau, rolling himself in his bed-clothes, "if you will aid me, to-morrow, yes, to-morrow, I— In short, good-night."

*

The next day, Madame de la Baudraye, to whom, some six months before, her husband had given horses which he used for his work and an old calash whose iron-work rattled, conceived the idea of driving Bianchon as far as Cosne, where he was to take the diligence for Lyons on his journey. She took along her mother and Lousteau; but she proposed to leave her mother at La Baudraye, to go on to Cosne with the two Parisians and to return alone with Étienne. She assumed a charming toilet which the journalist observed carefully,—laced bronze boots, stockings of gray silk, an organdie dress, a green scarf with long shaded fringes, and a charming capote in black lace, ornamented with flowers. As for Lousteau, the rogue had put himself on a war footing,—varnished boots, pantaloons of English cloth creased in front, a very open waistcoat which revealed an extra-fine shirt and the cascades of black satin broché of his finest cravat, a black redingote, very short and very light. The procureur du roi and Monsieur Gravier looked at each other in a singular manner when they saw the two Parisians in the calash, and they themselves standing like

two ninnies at the foot of the perron. Monsieur de la Baudraye, who, from the height of the last step, made to the doctor a slight salute with his little hand, could not prevent himself from smiling when he heard Monsieur de Clagny saying to Monsieur Gravier :

"You should have accompanied them on horseback."

At that moment Gatien, mounted upon Monsieur de la Baudraye's quiet mare, appeared from the alley that led to the stables and rejoined the calash.

"Ah ! good," said the receiver of taxes, "the boy is on guard."

"What a nuisance !" exclaimed Dinah when she saw Gatien. "In thirteen years, for it is now nearly thirteen years that I have been married, I have not had three hours of liberty—"

"Married, madame ?" said the journalist, smiling. "You remind me of a saying of the late Michaud, who uttered so many fine ones. He was departing for Palestine, and his friends were representing to him the dangers of such a journey at his age. 'And then,' said one of them to him, 'you are married ?' 'Oh !' he replied, 'I am so little married.'"

The severe Madame Piédefer could not repress a smile.

"I should not be surprised to see Monsieur de Clagny mounted upon my pony, come to complete the escort," exclaimed Dinah.

"Oh ! if the procureur du roi does not join us," said Lousteau, "you can rid yourself of this little

young man when we get to Sancerre. Bianchon will have necessarily forgotten something on his table, as the manuscript of his first lesson for his course, and you will entreat Gatien to go back and look for it at Anzy."

This ruse, though simple, put Madame de la Baudraye in a fine humor. The route from Anzy to Sancerre, from which are discovered glimpses of magnificent landscapes, from which frequently the superb sheet of the Loire produces the effect of a lake, was gayly traversed, for Dinah was happy to find herself so well comprehended. They discussed love theoretically, which permits friends *in petto* to take in some sort the measure of their hearts. The journalist assumed a tone of elegant corruption in order to prove that love obeyed no law, that the characters of the lovers varied the accidents infinitely, that the events of social life augmented still more the variety of phenomena, that everything was possible and true in this sentiment; that many a woman, after having for a long time resisted every seduction and true passions, might succumb in a few hours to an idea, to an inward storm in the secret of which there would be no one but God!

"Eh! is not that the meaning of all the stories which we have been relating to each other for the last three days?" he said.

For the last three days, the lively imagination of Dinah had been occupied with the most insidious romances, and the conversation of the two Parisians had acted upon this woman like the most dangerous

books. Lousteau followed with his eye the effects of this skilful manœuvre to seize the moment in which this prey, whose willingness concealed itself under the thoughtfulness which springs from irresolution, should be entirely confused. Dinah wished to show La Baudraye to the two Parisians, and they there played the little comedy agreed upon of the manuscript forgotten by Bianchon in his chamber at Anzy. Gatien went off at a hard gallop at the orders of his sovereign, Madame Piédefer went to make some purchases at Sancerre, and Dinah, alone with the two friends, took the road to Cosne. Lousteau placed himself near the châtelaine and Bianchon took the front seat. The conversation of the two friends was kind-hearted and full of pity for the fate of this superior soul so little comprehended and, above all, in such evil surroundings. Bianchon aided the journalist admirably by deriding the procureur du roi, the receiver of taxes and Gatien; there was something so indefinably scornful in his observations, that Madame de la Baudraye did not dare to defend her adorers.

"I can explain to myself perfectly," said the physician as they crossed the Loire, "the condition in which you have remained. You could be accessible only to love through the head, which often leads to love by the heart, and certainly none of those men there are capable of disguising what there is objectionable in the senses in early life, in the eyes of a delicate woman. To-day, for you, to love becomes a necessity."

"A necessity!" exclaimed Dinah, looking at the physician with curiosity. "Should I then love by prescription?"

"If you continue to live as you are living, in three years you will be frightful," replied Bianchon in a magisterial tone.

"Monsieur!—" said Madame de la Baudraye, almost terrified.

"You must excuse my friend," said Lousteau pleasantly to the baroness, "he is always a physician, and love is for him only a question of hygiene. But he is not egotistical, in this case he is evidently concerned with your interests only, since he departs in an hour—"

At Cosne quite a crowd gathered around the old repainted calash, on the panels of which might be seen the arms given by Louis XIV. to the neo-La Baudraye: *gules, a pair of scales or, chief, azure charged with three small cross crosslets argent; supporters, two greyhounds argent collared azure and chained or.* This ironical device: *Deo sic patet fides et hominibus,* had been inflicted upon the converted Calvinist by the satirical D'Hozier.

"Let us get out, they will come to notify us," said the baroness, who posted her coachman on the lookout.

Dinah took Bianchon's arm, and the physician went off to take a promenade on the banks of the Loire with so rapid a step that the journalist was obliged to remain behind. A single wink had sufficed to make Lousteau comprehend that the doctor wished to serve him.

"Étienne has pleased you," said Bianchon to Dinah, "he has appealed keenly to your imagination, we talked about you yesterday evening, and he loves you— But he is a light man, difficult to fix in one spot, his poverty condemns him to live in Paris, whilst everything orders you to live in Sancerre— Look at life from a somewhat lofty point of view— make of Lousteau your friend, do not be exacting, he will come three times a year to pass some fine days with you, and you will owe to him beauty, happiness and fortune. Monsieur de la Baudraye may live a hundred years, but he may also perish in nine days, through not having put on that shroud of flannel in which he envelops himself; do not then compromise anything. Be wise, both of you. Do not say a word to me. I have read in your heart."

Madame de la Baudraye was defenceless before such precise affirmations and before a man who spoke at once as a doctor, as a confessor, and as a confidant.

"Eh! what," she said, "can you imagine that a woman could enter into competition with the mistresses of a journalist?— Monsieur Lousteau seems to me to be agreeable, very clever, but he is blasé— etc., etc."

Dinah returned on her steps and was obliged to arrest the flow of her words under which she desired to conceal her intentions; for Étienne, who appeared to be much interested in the progress of Cosne, came to meet them.

"Believe me," said Bianchon to her, "he needs to be loved seriously; and, if he should change his mode of life, his talent would be the gainer by it."

Dinah's coachman ran up, out of breath, to announce the arrival of the diligence, and they hastened their steps. Madame de la Baudraye walked between the two Parisians.

"Adieu, my children," said Bianchon before they entered Cosne, "I bless you."

He released Madame de la Baudraye's arm, which was taken by Lousteau, who pressed it against his heart with an expression of tenderness! What a difference for Dinah! Étienne's arm caused her the most lively emotion, while from that of Bianchon she had experienced nothing. There then passed between her and the journalist one of those reddening glances which are more than avowals.

"There are no longer any but the women of the provinces who wear organdie dresses, the only stuff the rumpling of which will not disappear," thought Lousteau. "This woman, who has chosen me for her lover, is going to make difficulties because of her dress. If she had put on a foulard dress, I should be happy— What is the object of these resistances?—"

Whilst Lousteau was endeavoring to determine whether Madame de la Baudraye had had the intention of setting up for herself an insurmountable barrier by selecting an organdie dress, Bianchon, aided by the coachman, had caused his baggage to be placed on the diligence. Finally he came to bid

farewell to Dinah, who seemed to be very affectionate to him.

"Return, Madame la Baronne, do not wait for me— Gatien is coming," he said in her ear. "It is late—" he went on, aloud. "Adieu!"

"Adieu, great man!" exclaimed Lousteau, grasping Bianchon's hand.

When the journalist and Madame de la Baudraye, seated beside each other in the depths of this old calash, recrossed the Loire, they each hesitated to speak. In such a situation as this, the word by which the silence is broken possesses a terrifying compass.

"Do you know how much I love you?" then said the journalist, point-blank.

Victory might be flattering for Lousteau, but defeat caused him no grief. This indifference was the secret of his audacity. He took Madame de la Baudraye's hand in saying to her these words, so very clear, and clasped it between his own; but Dinah gently disengaged her hand.

"Yes, I am worth as much as a grisette or an actress," said she in a voice that betrayed emotion through her jesting; "but do you think that a woman who, notwithstanding her absurdities, has some intelligence, should have reserved the finest treasures of her heart for a man who can see in her only a passing pleasure?— I am not surprised to hear from your mouth a word which so many individuals have already spoken to me— but—"

The coachman turned around.

"Here is Monsieur Gatien," he said.

"I love you, I wish you, and you shall be mine, for I have never felt for any woman that with which you inspire me!" exclaimed Lousteau in Dinah's ear.

"In spite of myself, perhaps?" she replied smiling.

"At least it is necessary for my honor that you should have the air of having been vigorously attacked," said the Parisian, to whom the fatal immaculateness of the organdie suggested a facetious idea.

Before Gatien had reached the end of the bridge, the audacious journalist rumpled up the organdie dress so quickly that Madame de la Baudraye saw herself in an unpresentable condition.

"Ah! Monsieur!—" exclaimed Dinah majestically.

"You defied me," replied the Parisian.

But Gatien arrived with the celerity of a deceived lover. In order to regain a little of Madame de la Baudraye's esteem, Lousteau made an effort to conceal from Gatien's sight the disarranged dress by leaning outside the vehicle to speak to him, and on Dinah's side.

"Hasten to our inn," he said to him, "there is yet time, the diligence does not start for half an hour; the manuscript is on the table of the chamber occupied by Bianchon, it is of great importance to him, for he would not know how to go on with his course."

"Go now, Gatien!" said Madame de la Baudraye, looking at her young adorer with an expression full of despotism.

The youth, commanded by this insistence, turned back, riding at full speed.

"Drive quickly to La Baudraye!" cried Lousteau to the coachman; "Madame la Baronne is unwell. Your mother alone shall be in the secret of my ruse," he said, seating himself again at Dinah's side.

"You call that infamy a ruse?" said Madame de la Baudraye, repressing some tears that were dried by the fire of an irritated pride.

She leaned back in a corner of the calash, crossed her arms on her breast and looked at the Loire, the landscape, everything but Lousteau. The journalist then took on a caressing tone and talked all the way to La Baudraye, where Dinah fled from the calash into her house, endeavoring to be seen by no one. In her trouble she threw herself upon a sofa to weep.

"If I am for you an object of horror, of hatred, or of scorn, well, I will go," said Lousteau, who had followed her.

And the roué placed himself at Dinah's feet. It was at this crisis that Madame Piédefer appeared, saying to her daughter:

"Well, what is the matter with you? what has happened?"

"Give your daughter another dress, quickly," said the audacious Parisian in the ear of the pious old lady.

And, hearing the furious gallop of Gatien's horse,

Madame de la Baudraye threw herself into her chamber, where her mother followed her.

"There is nothing at the inn!" said Gatien to Lousteau, who went out to meet him.

"And you found nothing either at the Château d'Anzy!" replied Lousteau.

"You have been making fun of me," returned Gatien in a little dry tone.

"Exactly," said Lousteau. "Madame de la Baudraye found it very inconvenient that you should follow her without being invited. Believe me, it is a bad way of seducing women, to weary them. Dinah has tricked you, you have made her laugh, that is a success that not one of you has had with her for thirteen years, and which you owe to Bianchon, for your cousin is the *author of the farce of the manuscript!*— Will the horse get over it?" observed Lousteau pleasantly, while Gatien was asking himself whether he should get angry or not.

"The horse!—" repeated Gatien.

At that moment Madame de la Baudraye came out, wearing a velvet dress and accompanied by her mother, who threw irritated glances at Lousteau. Before Gatien, it was imprudent for Dinah to appear cold or severe with Lousteau, who, profiting by this circumstance, offered his arm to this false Lucretia; but she refused it.

"Will you send away a man who has vowed his life to you?" he said to her, walking close by her side, "I will go to stay in Sancerre and depart tomorrow."

"Are you coming, mother?" said Madame de la Baudraye to Madame Piédefer, thus avoiding a reply to the direct argument by which Lousteau had forced her to take a position.

The Parisian assisted the mother to enter the carriage, he assisted Madame de la Baudraye by taking her gently by the arm, and he took his place on the front seat with Gatien, who left the horse at La Baudraye.

"You have changed your dress," said Gatien maladroitly to Dinah.

"Madame la Baronne was affected by the fresh air of the Loire," replied Lousteau. "Bianchon advised her to dress warmly."

Dinah became as red as a poppy, and Madame Piédefer assumed a severe expression.

"Poor Bianchon, he is on the road to Paris, what a noble heart!" said Lousteau.

"Oh! yes," replied Madame de la Baudraye, "he is both great and delicate, that man—"

"We were so gay when we set out," said Lousteau, "now you are not feeling well, and you speak to me bitterly, and why?— Are you not then accustomed to hearing it said that you are beautiful and intellectual? I, I declare before Gatien, I renounce Paris, I am going to stay in Sancerre and increase the number of your faithful cavaliers. I have felt so young in my natal country, I have already forgotten Paris and its corruptions, and its ennuis, and its fatiguing pleasures— Yes, my life seems to me as if purified—"

Dinah allowed Lousteau to talk without looking at him ; but there was a moment when the improvisation of this serpent became so spiritual under the effort which he made to imitate passion by phrases and by ideas of which the sense, hidden from Gatien, flowered out in Dinah's heart, that she lifted her eyes to him. This look seemed to complete the joy of Lousteau, who redoubled his sallies, and finally made Madame de la Baudraye laugh. When, in a situation in which her pride is so cruelly wounded, a woman has laughed, everything is compromised. When they entered the immense court of her bowling green, sanded and ornamented with baskets of flowers which gave such value to the façade of Anzy, the journalist was saying :

" When the women love us, they pardon us everything, even our crimes ; when they do not love us, they pardon us nothing, not even our virtues ! Will you pardon me ? " he added in Madame de la Baudraye's ear, pressing her arm against his heart with a gesture full of tenderness.

Dinah could not prevent herself from smiling.

During the dinner, and during the rest of the evening, Lousteau was charming in his gayety, his enthusiasm ; but, while thus depicting his intoxication, he yielded himself up at moments to reverie, as a man who appeared to be absorbed in his happiness. After the coffee, Madame de la Baudraye and her mother permitted the men to walk about in the gardens. Monsieur Gravier then said to the procureur du roi :

"Have you remarked that Madame de la Baudraye, who went away in an organdie dress, came back in a velvet dress?"

"In getting into the carriage at Cosne, the dress caught on the brass button of the calash and was torn from top to bottom," replied Lousteau.

"Oh!" said Gatien, pierced to the heart by the cruel difference between the journalist's two explanations.

Lousteau, who counted upon this surprise of Gatien, took him by the arm and grasped it to ask him to keep silence. A few minutes later, Lousteau left the three adorers of Dinah alone, and took possession of the little La Baudraye. Gatien was then interrogated upon the events of the journey. Monsieur Gravier and Monsieur de Clagny were stupefied to find that Dinah had been found alone with Lousteau on the return from Cosne, but more stupefied still at the Parisian's two versions of the changing of the dress. Therefore the attitude of these three discomfited men was very much embarrassed during the evening. The next morning, each of them had business which obliged him to leave Anzy, where Dinah remained alone with her mother, her husband and Lousteau. The vexation of the three Sancerrois organized in the town a great clamor. The fall of the Muse of Berri, of Nivernais and of Morvan, was accompanied by a real charivari of slanders, of calumnies and of divers conjectures among which figured in the first line the history of the organdie dress. Never had one of

Dinah's toilets had so much success, and awakened more the attention of the young persons of her own sex, who could not in the least explain the connection between love and the organdie at which the married women laughed so much. The wife of the president Boirouge, furious at her son Gatien's misadventure, forgot all the eulogies she had lavished on the poem of *Paquita la Sévillane;* she fulminated horrible censures against a woman capable of publishing such an infamy.

"The unhappy woman commits everything that she has written!" said she. "Perhaps she will end as did her heroine!—"

It was with Dinah among the Sancerrois as it was with Marshal Soult in the opposition journals,—so long as he was minister, he had lost the battle of Toulouse; as soon as he had entered into retirement, he had gained it! Virtuous, Dinah was accepted as the rival of the Camille Maupins, of the women the most illustrious; but, happy, she was *an unhappy woman!*

Monsieur de Clagny defended Dinah courageously, he returned on several occasions to the Château d'Anzy in order to have the right to deny the reports that were afloat concerning her whom he still adored, even though fallen, and he maintained that it was only a matter of a collaboration between her and Lousteau in a great literary work. The procureur du roi was derided.

The month of October was ravishing, autumn is the most beautiful season in the valleys of the

Loire; but in 1836, it was peculiarly magnificent. Nature seemed to be the accomplice of Dinah's happiness,—as Bianchon had predicted, she arrived by degrees at a violent love of the heart. In the course of a month the châtelaine changed completely. She was astonished to find so many inert faculties, sleeping, useless, up to this time. Lousteau was an angel for her, for the heart's love, that real need of great souls, made of her an entirely new woman. Dinah lived! she found the employment of her forces, she discovered unexpected perspectives in her future, she was happy at last, happy without cares, without obstacles. This immense château, the gardens, the park, the forest, were so favorable to love! Lousteau found in Madame de la Baudraye an ingenuousness of impression, an innocence if you like, which rendered her original, —there was in her something piquant, unforeseen, much more than in a young girl. He was conscious of a flattery which with nearly all women is a comedy, but which with Dinah was real; she learned love from him, he was indeed the first in this heart. Finally, he gave himself the trouble to be excessively kind. Men have,—as have women, moreover,—a repertory of recitatives, of cantilenas, of nocturnes, of motifs, of returns—must we say, receipts, although this is concerning love?—which they think their exclusive property. Those who have arrived at Lousteau's age endeavor to distribute skilfully the various portions of this treasure throughout the opera of a passion; but, seeing

only a piece of good fortune in his adventure with Dinah, the Parisian wished to engrave his souvenir in ineffaceable lines on this heart, and he lavished during this beautiful month of October all his most coquettish melodies and his most knowing barcarolles. In short, he exhausted all the resources of the *mise en scène* of love,—to make use of one of those expressions diverted from the slang of the theatres and which expresses this performance admirably.

"If this woman forget me!"—he said to himself sometimes when returning with her to the château from a long promenade in the woods, "I would not resent it, she would have found something better!—"

When, between each other, two beings have exchanged the duos of this delicious score and they still please each other, it can be said that they love each other truly. But Lousteau would not have the time to repeat himself, for he expected to leave Anzy in the first days of November, his feuilleton recalled him to Paris. Before déjeuner, on the day preceding the projected departure, the journalist and Dinah saw the little La Baudraye arrive with an artist from Nevers, a restorer of sculptures.

"What is it about?" asked Lousteau, "what do you wish to do to your château?"

"This is what I wish," replied the little old man, conducting the journalist, his wife and the provincial artist out on the terrace.

He showed upon the façade, over the entrance door, a quaint cartouche supported by two sirens, bearing a sufficient resemblance to that which decorates the arcade, now condemned, by which you formerly went from the quai of the Tuileries into the court of the old Louvre, and over which may be read, *Bibliothèque du cabinet du roi.* This cartouche carried the old coat of arms of the Uxelles, which *bore or and gules, in fess, one and the other, with two lions, gules dexter and or sinister, for supporters; the shield with a crest of a knight's helmet, mantled with the colors of the shield and surmounted by the ducal coronet.* Then for device : *Cy paroist!* a proud and resounding motto.

"I wish to replace the arms of the house of Uxelles by my own ; and as they are repeated six times in the two façades and in the two wings, that is not a small affair."

"Your arms of yesterday!" exclaimed Dinah, "and after 1830!—"

"Have I not constituted a majorat ? "

"I could understand that if you had children," said the journalist to him.

"Oh!" replied the little old man, "Madame de la Baudraye is still young, there is no time lost as yet."

This fatuity made Lousteau smile, for he did not understand Monsieur de la Baudraye.

"Well, *Didine*," said he in Madame de la Baudraye's ear, "of what use is your remorse ? "

Dinah entreated for another day, and the two

lovers exchanged their farewells after the manner of those theatres which give ten times in succession the last representation of a well-paying piece. But how many promises were exchanged! how many solemn compacts were exacted by Dinah and granted without any difficulties by the impudent journalist! With the superiority of a superior woman Dinah conducted, in the sight and with the knowledge of the whole country, Lousteau as far as Cosne, in the company of her mother and the little La Baudraye. When, ten days later, Madame de la Baudraye received in her salon at La Baudraye, Messieurs de Clagny, Gatien and Gravier, she found an opportunity to say audaciously to each of them:

"I owe to Monsieur Lousteau the knowledge that I was not loved for myself alone."

And what fine little sarcasms she retailed concerning men, and the nature of their sentiments, and the aim of their vile love, etc.! Of Dinah's three lovers, Monsieur de Clagny alone said to her: "I love you *whatever happens!*—" Thus Dinah took him for a confidant and disbursed for him all the sweetnesses of friendship which women confect for the Gurths who wear thus the collar of an adored slavery.

On his return to Paris, Lousteau lost in the course of a few weeks the remembrance of the beautiful days passed at the Château d'Anzy. For this reason. Lousteau lived by his pen. In this century, and especially since the triumph of a bourgeoisie which takes very good care not to imitate Francis I. or Louis XIV., to live by one's pen is a labor

which would be refused by convicts, they would prefer death. To live by one's pen, is not that to create? to create to-day, to-morrow, forever—or to have the appearance of creating; now, the semblance costs as much as the reality! Outside of his feuilleton in a daily journal, which resembled the rock of Sisyphus and which rolled back every Monday on the handle of his pen, Étienne worked for three or four literary journals. But, reassure yourselves! he did not put any artistic conscientiousness in his productions. The Sancerrois belonged, by his facility, by his carelessness if you like, to that group of writers known by the name of *faiseurs* or *hommes de métier*. In literature, in Paris, in our days, *le métier* is a resignation given of all pretensions to any place whatever. When he no longer can, or when he no longer wishes to be anything, a writer makes himself a *faiseur*. He then leads a life sufficiently agreeable. The débutants, the blue-stockings, the actresses who are commencing and those who are finishing their careers, authors and publishing houses caress or pamper these pens-of-all-work. Lousteau, become a "man about town," had no longer much more than his rent to pay in the matter of expenses. He had boxes at all the theatres. The sale of the books of which he rendered or did not render any account paid for his gloves; thus he would say to those authors who printed at their own expense:

"I always have your book in hand."

He collected on the small vanities his taxes in

designs, in pictures. All his days were occupied by dinners, his evenings by the theatre, the morning by friends, by visits, by idling. His feuilleton, his articles and the two novels which he wrote each year for the weekly journals were the duty levied upon this happy life. Étienne had, however, struggled for years to arrive at this position. Finally, known in all literature, loved as much for the good as for the evil which he committed with an irreproachable good nature, he allowed himself to drift, careless of the future. He reigned in the midst of a coterie of newcomers, he had friendships, that is to say habits, which had lasted for fifteen years, people with whom he supped, he dined and permitted himself his jests. He earned about seven or eight hundred francs a month, a sum which the prodigality peculiar to the poor rendered insufficient. Thus he found himself quite as unhappy as when, at his début in Paris, he had said to himself:

"If I had five hundred francs a month, I should be very rich!"

This is the reason of this phenomenon. Lousteau lived in the Rue des Martyrs, in a pretty, magnificently furnished little ground floor, with a garden. At the time of his installation, in 1833, he had made with a furnisher an arrangement which gnawed at his peace and comfort for a long time. This apartment cost twelve hundred francs' rent. Now, the months of January, of April, of July and of October were, as he said, poverty-stricken months. The rent and the porter's bills swept off everything.

Lousteau did not take any fewer cabriolets, did not spend a hundred francs less in déjeuners ; he smoked thirty francs' worth of cigars, and was unable to refuse either a dinner or a dress to his chance mistresses. He then so anticipated his income on the returns, always uncertain, of the following months, that he was no more able to see a hundred francs on his chimney-piece, earning seven or eight hundred francs a month, than when he had gained scarcely two hundred in 1822. Wearied sometimes with these rotations of literary life, as bored with pleasure as is a courtesan, he withdrew from the stream sometimes, seated himself on the slope of the shore and said to some of his intimate friends, to Nathan, to Bixiou, smoking a cigar at the back of his garden, before a lawn always green and as large as a dining-table :

" How are we going to end ? The gray hairs are presenting us with their respectful summons !—"

" Bah ! we shall get married, when we wish, we will concern ourselves with our marriage as much as we concern ourselves with a drama or a book," said Nathan.

" And Florine ? " asked Bixiou.

" We all have a Florine," said Étienne, throwing away the end of his cigar on the grass and thinking of Madame Schontz.

Madame Schontz was a woman sufficiently pretty to be able to sell very dearly the usufruct of her beauty, while still preserving the bare property to Lousteau, the friend of her heart. Like all those women who, from the name of the church around

which they had grouped themselves have been named *lorettes*, she lived in the Rue Fléchier, two steps from Lousteau. This lorette found a satisfaction to her vanity in scoffing at her friends by telling them of her being loved by a man of wit and learning. These details concerning the life and the finances of Lousteau are necessary; for this penury and this bohemian existence, to which the Parisian luxury was indispensable, were to have a cruel influence upon the future of Dinah.

Those to whom the Bohemia of Paris is known can then comprehend how, at the end of two weeks, the journalist, plunged again into the midst of his literary world, was able to laugh at his baroness, among his friends, and even with Madame Schontz. As to those who find these doings infamous, it is almost useless to present to them inadmissible excuses.

"What did you do at Sancerre?" asked Bixiou of Lousteau when they met.

"I have done a service to three honest provincials, a receiver of taxes, a little cousin and a procureur du roi, who had been turning for ten years," he replied, "around one of those hundred-and-one tenth Muses who ornament the departments, without touching her any more than you touch one of those set pieces set up for dessert, until some bold soul takes a knife to open it—"

"Poor boy!" said Bixiou, "I said very plainly that you were going to Sancerre to put your soul out to grass—*au vert,—ouvert,* open.

"Your pun is as detestable as my Muse is beautiful, my dear fellow," replied Lousteau. "Ask Bianchon."

"A muse and a poet," replied Bixiou, "your adventure was then a homœopathic treatment."

On the tenth day, Lousteau received a letter with the Sancerre postmark.

"Good! good!" said he. "'Cherished friend, idol of my heart and of my soul—' Twenty pages of writing! one a day and dated at midnight! She writes to me when she is alone— Poor woman! Ah! ah! *Post-scriptum.* 'I dare not ask of you to write as I do, every day; but I hope to have from my well-beloved two lines every week to ease my mind—' What a pity to burn that! it is superlatively written," said Lousteau to himself, throwing the ten sheets into the fire after having read them. "This woman is born *to make copy.*"

Lousteau had little fear of Madame Schontz, by whom he was loved *for himself;* but he had supplanted one of his friends in the heart of a marchioness. The marchioness, a woman sufficiently free with her person, came sometimes unexpectedly to his house in the evening, in a fiacre, veiled, and permitted herself in her quality of a woman of letters, to search in all the drawers. A week later, Lousteau, who scarcely thought of Dinah, was overturned by another package from Sancerre,—eight leaves! sixteen pages! He heard a woman's step, he feared some domiciliary visit from the marchion-

ess and threw all these ravishing and delicious proofs of love in the fire—without reading them!

"A woman's letter!" exclaimed Madame Schontz, entering, "the paper, the wax, smell too pleasantly—"

"Monsieur, see," said a porter of the *messageries*, depositing in the antechamber two enormous game baskets. "All prepaid. Will you sign my receipt-book?"

"All prepaid!" said Madame Schontz. "That can only come from Sancerre."

"Yes, madame," said the porter.

"Your tenth Muse is a woman of a high order of intelligence," said the lorette, opening one of the baskets whilst Lousteau signed; "I love a Muse who knows housekeeping and who makes at the same time pâtés of ink—blots—and pâtés of game.—Oh! the beautiful flowers!" she exclaimed, uncovering the second basket. "Why, there is nothing more beautiful in Paris!— And what! and what! a hare, partridges, half a roebuck! We will invite your friends and we will make a famous dinner, for Athalie possesses a particular talent for cooking roebuck."

Lousteau replied to Dinah; but, instead of replying with his heart, he did it with his mind. The letter was all the more dangerous, it resembled a letter from Mirabeau to Sophie. The style of true lovers is limpid. It is a clear water which allows to be seen the bottom of the heart between two shores ornamented with the little nothings of life, enamelled

with those flowers of the soul which are born each day and of which the charm is intoxicating, but for two beings only. Therefore, as soon as a love letter can give pleasure to the third person who reads it, it has certainly issued from the head and not from the heart. But the women are always taken by it,—they think themselves the unique source of this wit.

*

Toward the end of the month of December, Lousteau no longer read Dinah's letters, which accumulated in a drawer of his bureau, always open, under his shirts, which they perfumed. There was presented to him one of those chances which the bohemians should seize by every hair. In the middle of this month, Madame Schontz, who was much interested in Lousteau, asked him to call at her house one morning on business.

"My dear, you can get married," she said to him.

"Frequently, my dear, fortunately!"

"When I say get married, that means to make a fine marriage. You have no prejudices, there is no need to cover things up,—this is the case. A young person has committed a fault, and her mother does not know of the first kiss. The father is an honest notary full of honor, he has had the wisdom to make no noise about it. He wishes to marry his daughter within two weeks, he will give a dot of a hundred and fifty thousand francs, for he has three other children; but—not so bad!—he adds a supplement of a hundred thousand francs from

hand to hand to cover the damage. It is an old family of the Parisian bourgeoisie in the Quartier des Lombards.—"

"Well, why does not the lover marry her?"

"Dead."

"What a romance! it is only in the Rue des Lombards that things now happen in that way—"

"But you are not going to believe that a jealous brother has killed the seducer? This young man has died very stupidly of a pleurisy, caught in coming out from a theatre. Head clerk, and without a farthing, my man seduced the girl just to secure the practice. And there is a vengeance from Heaven!"

"From whom did you learn this?"

"From Malaga, the notary is her great man."

"What! is it Cardot, the son of that little old man with a queue and powdered, the first friend of Florentine?"

"Precisely. Malaga, whose lover is a little cricket of a musician eighteen years old, cannot in conscience marry him at that age; she has, moreover, no reason to wish to do so. Besides, Monsieur Cardot wishes a man of at least thirty. This notary, it seems to me, would be very much flattered to have for son-in-law a celebrity. Therefore, consider yourself, my good man! You pay your debts, you become rich with twelve thousand francs of income, and you have not the vexation of making yourself a father,—there they are, the advantages! After all, you marry a consolable widow. There

are fifty thousand francs of income in the house, over and above the office; you cannot then have some day less than fifteen thousand other francs of income, and you will be a member of a family which, politically, occupies a fine position. Cardot is the brother-in-law of the old Camusot, the deputy, who was so long with Fanny Beaupré."

"Yes," said Lousteau, "Camusot the father, married the eldest daughter of the late little Père Cardot, and they carried out their humbugs together."

"Well," resumed Madame Schontz, "Madame Cardot, the notary's wife, is a Chiffreville, manufacturers of chemical products, the aristocracy of to-day, what! the Potashes! There is the bad side of it,—you will have a terrible mother-in-law.—Oh! a woman to kill her daughter if she knew *in what condition she*— This Cardot is pious, she has lips like two penny ribbons of faded pink.—A high liver like you will never be accepted by that woman, who, with good intention, will investigate your bachelor life and will know all your past; but Cardot will, he says, make use of his paternal authority. The poor man will be obliged to be gracious for a few days to his wife, a woman of wood, my dear; Malaga, who has met her, called her a hard bristle brush. Cardot is forty years old, he will be mayor of his arrondissement, he will perhaps become deputy. He offers, instead of the hundred thousand francs, to give a pretty house in the Rue Saint-Lazare, between a court and a garden, which cost

him only sixty thousand francs at the break-up of July ; he will sell it to you, a story which will give you an occasion to go and come in his house, to see the daughter, to please the mother.—That will constitute you an owner in Madame Cardot's eyes. In short, you will be like a prince in that little hôtel. You will get yourself appointed, through Cardot's influence, librarian to some ministry where there will be no books. Well, if you place your money as security in the journal, you will have ten thousand francs of income, you earn six, your library will give you four.—Find anything better! If you should marry a lamb without a spot, it might change into a light woman at the end of two years.—What is it that is offered you ? a dividend before it is due. That is the fashion! If you will believe me, you had better come and dine to-morrow with Malaga. You will there see your father-in-law, he will learn of the indiscretion, which will be thought to have been committed by Malaga, with whom he cannot get vexed, and you will then have the advantage of him. As to your wife—Eh!—why, her fault leaves you still free to live like a bachelor—"

"Truly, your language is no more hypocritical than a cannon-ball."

"I love you for yourself, that is all, and I reason it out. Well, what are you doing, sitting there like an Abd-el-Kadir in wax ? There is no need for reflection. It is head or tail, marriage. Well, you have drawn tail ? "

"You will have my reply to-morrow," said Lousteau.

"I would rather have it immediately, Malaga will describe the goods to you this evening."

"Well, yes—"

Lousteau passed the evening in writing to the marchioness a long letter in which he gave her the reasons which obliged him to marry,—his constant poverty, the indolence of his imaginative faculties, his white hairs, his physical and moral fatigue, in short, four pages of reasons.

"As for Dinah, I will just send her an announcement of the event," he said to himself. "As Bixiou says, I have not my equal for knowing how to cut a passion off short.—"

Lousteau, who had at first made difficulties with himself, had arrived by the next day at the point of fearing that this marriage might not be accomplished. Thus it happened that he was charming with the notary.

"I met monsieur your father at Florentine's," he said to him, "I should have met you at the house of Mademoiselle Turquet. Like father, like son. He was very nice and philosophical, the little Père Cardot, for—if you will permit me—we thus designated him. In those days, Florine, Florentine, Tullia, Coralie and Mariette were like the five fingers of your hand.—That was fifteen years ago. You understand that my follies are no longer to be committed.—In those days the love of pleasure carried me away ; to-day, I have ambition ; but we are

living in a period when, in order to succeed, it is necessary to have no debts, to have a fortune, a wife and children. If I pay the electoral tax, if I am the proprietor of my journal instead of being an editor, I should become a deputy just like so many others!"

Maître Cardot appreciated this profession of faith. Lousteau had put himself under arms, he pleased the notary, who, as may be readily conceived, was more unrestrained with a man who had been acquainted with the secrets of his father's life than he would have been with any other. On the next day, Lousteau was presented as the purchaser of the house in the Rue Saint-Lazare, in the bosom of the Cardot family, and he dined there three days later.

Cardot lived in an old house near the Place du Châtelet. Everything was thrifty in this household. Economical motives put green gauze over the slightest gildings. The furniture was covered with brown linen. If no one there felt any anxiety concerning the household fortunes, he experienced a strong desire to yawn in the first half-hour. Ennui was seated on all the furniture. The draperies hung sadly. The dining-room resembled that of a miser. If Lousteau had not known from Malaga in advance, at the mere sight of this household he would have divined that the notary's existence was passed on another scene. The journalist saw a tall, blonde young girl, with blue eyes, timid and languorous at once. He pleased the eldest brother, fourth clerk in the office, whom literary glory

attracted with its snares, and who was destined to be Cardot's successor. The younger sister was about twelve years of age. Lousteau, caparisoned with a little Jesuitical air, assumed the character of a man religious and monarchical with the mother, he was serious, precise, sedate, complimentary.

Twenty days after the presentation, at the fourth dinner, Félicie Cardot, who had been studying Lousteau out of the corners of her eyes, went to offer him a cup of coffee in the embrasure of a window and said to him in a low voice, with tears in her eyes:

"All my life, monsieur, will be employed in thanking you for your devotion to a poor girl.—"

Lousteau was moved, so much was there in the look, in the accent, in the attitude.

"She will make the happiness of an honest man," he said to himself as he pressed her hand for sole reply.

Madame Cardot considered her son-in-law as a man with a promising future; but, among all the fine qualities which she attributed to him, she was delighted with his morality. Prompted by the shrewd notary, Étienne had given his word to have neither natural child nor any liaison that might compromise the future of the dear Félicie.

"You may think me a little exacting," said the pious matron to the journalist, "but when you give a pearl like my Félicie to a man, you should watch over her future. I am not one of those mothers who are delighted to get rid of their daughters.

Monsieur Cardot goes ahead, he presses his daughter's marriage, he wishes to have it take place. We differ only in this.—Although with a man like you, monsieur, a writer whose youth has been preserved from actual demoralization by work, one might be secure, nevertheless, you would make a jest of me if I should marry my daughter with my eyes shut. I know very well that you are not an innocent, and I should be very much grieved at it for my Félicie"—this was said in his ear; "—but if you had one of those liaisons—Now, monsieur, you have heard of Madame Roguin, the wife of a notary who has had, most unfortunately for our profession, so cruel a celebrity. Madame Roguin is connected, and that since 1820, with a banker—"

"Yes, Du Tillet," replied Étienne, biting his lips when he thought of the imprudence with which he admitted knowing Du Tillet.

"Well, monsieur, if you were a mother, would you not tremble in thinking that your daughter might have the fate of Madame du Tillet? At her age, and née De Granville, to have for rival a woman of over fifty!— I would rather see my daughter dead than give her to a man who would have relations with a married woman— A grisette, a woman of the theatre, can be taken and left! According to my opinion, this sort of woman is not dangerous, love is a trade for her, she belongs to no one, one lost, two are found!— But a woman who has failed in her duty should attach herself to

her fault, she is excusable only by her constancy, if such a crime is ever excusable! It is thus at least that I understand the fault of a woman *comme il faut*, and this is what renders it so much to be feared.—"

Instead of seeking the meaning of these words, Étienne jested over them at Malaga's, where he went with his future father-in-law; for the notary and the journalist were on the best terms together. Lousteau was already posing before his intimate friends as an important man,—his life henceforth was to have a meaning, chance had taken care of him, in a few days he was going to become proprietor of a charming little hôtel in the Rue Saint-Lazare; he was going to marry, he was taking a charming wife, he would have about twenty thousand francs of income; he could now give a career to his ambition; he was beloved by his young bride, he was connected with several honorable families. In short, he was sailing with full sails over the blue lake of hope. Madame Cardot had desired to see the engravings of *Gil Blas*, one of those *illustrated* books which the French publishing houses were then undertaking, and Lousteau, the evening before, had brought her the first numbers. The notary's wife had her plan, she had borrowed this book only in order to return it, she wished for a pretext to fall unexpectedly into the apartment of her future son-in-law. By the aspect of this bachelor lodging, which her husband described to her as charming, she would know more, she said, than anyone could tell

her concerning Lousteau's habits. Her sister-in-law, Madame Camusot, from whom the fatal secret was hidden, was frightened at this marriage for her niece. Monsieur Camusot, counsellor at the royal court, the son of a first marriage, had said to his mother-in-law, Madame Camusot, sister of Maître Cardot, some things that were very little flattering for the journalist. Lousteau, this man so clever, saw nothing extraordinary in the wife of a rich notary wishing to see a fifteen-franc volume before purchasing it. The man of wit never stoops to examine the bourgeois, who escape his observation, thanks to this inattention; and, while he is deriding them, they have the time to garrote him. In the early days of January, 1837, Madame Cardot and her daughter took then an *urbaine*—sort of hackney coach—and went to the Rue des Martyrs, to return the numbers of the *Gil Blas* to Félicie's intended, charmed, both of them, at the prospect of seeing Lousteau's apartment. This species of domiciliary visits is made in the old bourgeois families. Étienne's porter was not to be found, but his daughter, learning from the worthy bourgeoise that she was speaking to the mother-in-law and the future wife of Monsieur Lousteau, delivered to them the key of the apartment all the more readily that Madame Cardot put a piece of gold in her hand. It was then about noon, the hour at which the journalist returned from déjeuner at the café Anglais. As he traversed the space between Notre Dame de Lorette and the Rue des Martyrs, Lousteau happened to look at a fiacre

which was ascending the Rue du Faubourg-Montmartre, and thought he had seen a vision in perceiving in it the face of Dinah! He was frozen stiff on his two legs in finding in fact his Didine at the door.

"What doest thou here?" cried he.

The *you* was not possible with a woman who was to be turned away.

"Eh, my love," she exclaimed, "hast thou not read my letters?—"

"Yes," replied Lousteau.

"Well?"

"Well?"

"Thou art a father!" replied the woman from the provinces.

"Bah!" he exclaimed, without taking into consideration the barbarity of this exclamation. "In fact," he said to himself, "she must be prepared for the catastrophe."

He made a sign to the coachman to stop, gave his hand to Madame de la Baudraye, and left the coachman with the vehicle full of trunks, promising himself emphatically to send away *illico*, he said to himself, the woman and her packages to the place she came from.

"Monsieur! monsieur!" cried the little Paméla.

The child was intelligent and knew that three women should not meet in a bachelor's apartment.

"Good! good!" said the journalist, conducting Dinah in.

Paméla then thought that this unknown woman was a relative, she added however:

"The key is in the door, your mother-in-law is there!"

In his perturbation, and in hearing from Madame de la Baudraye a multitude of phrases, Étienne understood: *My mother is there*, the only circumstance which, to him, was possible, and he entered. His future bride and the mother-in-law, then in the bedchamber, concealed themselves in a corner when they saw Étienne with a woman.

"At last, my Étienne, my angel, I am yours for life," cried Dinah, throwing herself upon his neck and clasping him close whilst he put the key inside. "Life was a perpetual agony for me in that Château d'Anzy, I will have it no longer, and, on the day on which it was necessary to declare that which constitutes my happiness, well, I have never found the strength for it. I bring you your wife and your child! Oh! not to write to me! to leave me two months without news!—"

"But Dinah, you put me in an embarrassing—"

"Do you love me?"

"How could I not love you?— But would it not have been better to have remained at Sancerre?— I am here in the most complete poverty, and I fear to make you share it.—"

"Your poverty will be paradise for me. I wish to live here, without ever going away—"

"*Mon Dieu*, that is pretty in words, but—"

Dinah sat down and burst into tears on hearing this phrase pronounced brusquely. Lousteau was

AT LOUSTEAU'S

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unable to resist this explosion, he clasped the baroness in his arms and embraced her.

"Do not weep, Didine!" he cried.

In uttering this phrase, the feuilletonist perceived in the glass the phantom of Madame Cardot, who, from the back of the chamber, was looking at him.

"Come Didine, go yourself with Paméla to see your trunks taken down," he said to her in her ear. "Go, do not weep, we shall be happy."

He conducted her to the door, and returned toward the notary's wife to appease the storm.

"Monsieur," said Madame Cardot to him, "I congratulate myself for having wished to see for myself the household of him who was to become my son-in-law. If my Félicie should die of it, she shall never be the wife of a man such as you. You owe yourself to the happiness of your Didine, monsieur."

And the pious woman went out, leading Félicie, who was weeping also, for Félicie had become accustomed to Lousteau. The frightful Madame Cardot got into her urbaine again, staring with an insolent fixedness at the poor Dinah, who felt still in her heart the dagger stroke of the *That is pretty in words;* but who, like all loving women, believed nevertheless in the *Do not weep, Didine!* Lousteau, who did not want for that species of resolution which the hazards of an agitated life give, said to himself:

"Didine has nobility; once notified of my marriage, she will immolate herself for my future, and I know how to take means to inform her of it."

Delighted to have found a ruse the success of which seemed to him certain, he commenced to dance to the tune of an air known as *Larifla fla fla!*

"Then, Didine once packed off again," he resumed, speaking to himself, "I will go to make a visit and a romance to Mamma Cardot—I shall have seduced her Félicie at Saint-Eustache—Félicie, culpable through love, carries in her body the gage of our happiness and—larifla fla fla!—the father cannot contradict me, fla fla—nor the daughter—larifla! *Ergo,* the notary, his wife and his daughter are all trapped, larifla fla fla!—"

To her great astonishment Dinah surprised Étienne dancing a prohibited dance.

"Your arrival and our happiness render me drunk with joy," he said to her, thus explaining this exhibition of folly.

"And I who thought myself no longer loved!" cried the poor woman, dropping the handbag which she was bringing in and weeping with pleasure in the armchair into which she had fallen.

"Set your things in order, my angel," said Étienne, laughing in his sleeve, "I have two words to write so that I can break an engagement with a bachelor party, for I wish to devote myself entirely to you. Order whatever you like, you are here in your own house."

Étienne wrote to Bixiou:

"My dear fellow, my baroness has suddenly fallen into my arms, and is going to cause me to miss my marriage if we do not get up one of those little scenes the best known in the

thousand and one vaudevilles of the Gymnase. Therefore I count upon you to come, like one of Molière's old men, to scold your nephew Léandre for his silliness, while the tenth Muse will be hidden in my bed-chamber; it is a case of taking her by her feelings, strike hard, be cruel, wound her. As for myself, you understand, I shall express a blind devotion and I shall be deaf in order to give you the right to exclaim. Come, if you can, at seven o'clock.

"Always yours,

"E. LOUSTEAU."

When this letter had been sent off by a messenger to the man in Paris who most amused himself by those mockeries which the artists have denominated *des charges*, Lousteau appeared to be eager to install the Muse of Sancerre in his house; he occupied himself with the setting in order of all the effects which she had brought with her, he acquainted her with all the beings and things in the lodging with so perfect a good faith, with a pleasure which so overflowed in words and caresses, that Dinah might well believe herself the most beloved woman in the world. This apartment, in which the smallest object bore the imprint of the mode, pleased her much more than her Château d'Anzy. Paméla Migeon, that intelligent little girl of fourteen, was interrogated by the journalist, with this end in view, to know if she would be willing to become the femme de chambre of the imposing baroness. Paméla, delighted, entered upon her functions at once by going to order the dinner at a restaurant on the boulevard. Dinah then comprehended the destitution which was hidden under the purely superficial luxury of this bachelor

household when she could find not one of the necessary utensils of daily life. While she was taking possession of the closets, of the bureaus, she formed the sweetest projects, she would change Lousteau's habits, she would make him domestic, she would complete his home comfort. The novelty of her position concealed the misfortune of it from Dinah, she saw in a mutual love the absolution of her fault, and she did not as yet carry her eyes outside of this apartment. Paméla, whose intelligence was equal to that of a lorette, went straight to Madame Schontz to ask of her some silverware, relating to her what had happened to Lousteau. After having placed everything in her house at Paméla's disposition, Madame Schontz hastened to Malaga, her intimate friend, in order to warn Cardot of the misfortune which had befallen his future son-in-law. Unconcerned over the crisis which affected his marriage, the journalist became more and more charming toward the woman from the provinces. The dinner gave occasion for those charming childishnesses of lovers who have regained their liberty and who are happy to be at length together. When the coffee had been taken, at the moment Lousteau was holding his Dinah on his knees, before the fire, Paméla suddenly appeared in a great fright.

"Here is Monsieur Bixiou! what must I say to him?" she asked.

"Go into the chamber," said the journalist to his mistress, "I will very soon send him away; he is one of my most intimate friends, to whom, more-

over, it will be necessary to make known my new mode of life."

"Oh! oh! two covers at table and a hat of dark blue velvet!" cried the gossip as he entered, "I am going away.—See what it is to get married, you make your farewells. How rich one finds one's self when one moves, *hein?*"

"Do you think I am going to get married?" said Lousteau.

"What! You are no longer going to get married, now?" cried Bixiou.

"No!"

"No! Ah, now! what has happened to you? can it be that you are going to commit some stupidity? What!—You, who by a blessing from Heaven have found twenty thousand francs of income, a house, a wife belonging to one of the first families of the upper bourgeoisie, in short, a wife from the Rue des Lombards—"

"Enough, enough, Bixiou, everything is over, go away!"

"Go away! I have the rights of friendship, I will abuse them. What has happened to you?"

"There has happened to me that lady from Sancerre, she is a mother, and we are going to live together, happy for the rest of our days.—You would have known this to-morrow, it is as well to inform you of it to-day."

"'What a lot of chimney tiles have fallen on my head!' as Arnal says. But, if this woman loves you for yourself, my dear fellow, she will go back

whence she came. Is it to be expected that a woman from the provinces will ever be able to get her sea legs on in Paris? She will mortify you in every way. Do you forget that she is a woman from the provinces? why, she will be as wearisome in happiness as in misfortune, she will display more talent in avoiding all grace than the Parisienne uses in inventing it. Listen, Lousteau! that passion should make you forget in what kind of times we are living, I can conceive, but I, your friend, I have no mythological bandages over my eyes.—Well, examine your position! You have been struggling along in the literary world for fifteen years, you are no longer young, you are walking on your uppers, you have walked so much!—Yes, my good fellow, you are acting like the gamins of Paris, who, to hide the holes in their stockings turn them down, and you carry your calves at your heels. Moreover, your pleasantry is somewhat antiquated. Your phrase is better known than a secret remedy."

"I will say to you, as the regent did to Cardinal Dubois: *That is enough of kicks like that!*" exclaimed Lousteau in a low tone of voice.

"Oh! old young man," replied Bixiou, "you feel the operator's iron on your wound. You have exhausted yourself, have you not? Well, in all the fire of youth, under the pressure of poverty, how much have you earned? You are not exactly in the first line, and you have not a thousand francs of your own. There is your position figured out.

Will you be able, in the decline of your powers, to support a household by your pen, when your wife, if she were honest, would not have the lorette's resources for extracting *a note for a thousand* from the depths where man keeps them? You will sink yourself in the *third cellar* of the social theatre.—That is only the financial side. Let us look at the political side. We are navigating in an epoch that is essentially bourgeois, when honor, virtue, delicacy, talent, knowledge, genius, in a word, consists in paying your notes, in owing nothing to any one, and in well managing your own little affairs. Take a position, be decent, have a wife and children, pay your rents and your taxes, take your turn on guard, be like the rest of the fusileers of your company, and you may aspire to anything, become minister, and your chances will be good, since you are not a Montmorency! You were going to fulfil all the conditions required in order to be a man in politics, you could have done all the dirty things exacted for public employment, even to playing mediocrity, you would have been almost natural. And for a woman who will leave you there, at the usual end of all eternal passions, in three, five or seven years, after having consumed your very last powers, intellectual and physical, you turn your back on the holy family, on the Rue des Lombards, on a whole political future, on thirty thousand francs of income, on public esteem.—Is it in this way that a man who no longer has any illusions, should end?—You might boil the pot with an actress who would render you

happy, that is what is called a cabinet question; but to live with a married woman!—that is to draw at sight on unhappiness! that is to take all the miseries of vice without having any of its pleasures—"

"Enough, I say to you, everything is summed up in a word,—I love Madame de la Baudraye and I prefer her to all the fortunes of the world, to all the positions— I may have allowed myself to be carried away by a puff of ambition— but everything yields to the happiness of being a father."

"Ah! you are going in for paternity? But, miserable man, we are the fathers only of the children of our lawful wives! What is a dirty little boy who does not bear our name? it is the last chapter of a romance! It will be taken away from you, your child! We have seen that particular subject in twenty vaudevilles, in the last ten years— Society, my dear fellow, will weigh down on you, sooner or later. Read *Adolphe* again! Oh! *Mon Dieu!* I see you, when you become well known, I see you, unhappy on all fours, without consideration, without fortune, struggling like the shareholders of a stock company abandoned by their director. Your director, for you, is happiness."

"Not a word more, Bixiou."

"But I have scarcely commenced. Listen, my dear fellow. There have been many attacks on marriage lately; but, apart from its advantage of being the sole method of establishing family succession, as it offers to pretty fellows without a sou a means of securing a fortune in two months, it resists

all its disadvantages! Thus there is no bachelor who does not repent sooner or later of having failed through his own fault to make a marriage of thirty thousand francs of income—"

"You will not understand me, then!" cried Lousteau in an exasperated voice, "go away— She is there—"

"Pardon me, why did you not say so sooner?— You are of age,—and she also," he said in a lower tone of voice, but still loud enough to be heard by Dinah. "She will make you finely repent of her happiness—"

"If it be a folly, I wish to commit it— Adieu!"

"A man overboard!" exclaimed Bixiou.

"May the devil fly away with those friends who think they have the right to lecture you," said Lousteau, opening the door of his bedroom, where he found Madame de la Baudraye sunk in an armchair, drying her eyes with an embroidered handkerchief.

"What have I come here to do?—" she said. "Oh! *Mon Dieu!* why?—Étienne, I am not so much a woman of the provinces as you think— You are playing a trick on me."

"Dear angel," replied Lousteau, taking Dinah in his arms, lifting her from the armchair and conducting her half dead into the salon, "we have each of us exchanged our future, sacrifice against sacrifice. Whilst I was loving in Sancerre, I was being married here; but I resisted— ah! I was very unhappy."

"Oh! I am going away!" cried Dinah, rising

like a crazy woman and making two steps toward the door.

"You will remain, my Didine, everything is ended. Come now! that fortune, is it to be had so cheap? Should I not have to marry a tall blonde who has a red nose, the daughter of a notary, and take on my back a mother-in-law who would give points to Madame Piédefer in matters of devotion!—"

Paméla suddenly burst into the salon and came to say in Lousteau's ear:

"Madame Schontz!—"

Lousteau rose, left Dinah on the divan and went out.

"All is over, my ducky," said the lorette to him. "Cardot does not wish to quarrel with his wife because of a son-in-law. The pious one made a scene— a sterling scene! In short, the actual head clerk, who has been second head clerk for the last two years, accepts the girl and the business."

"The blackguard!" cried Lousteau. "What! in two hours, he was able to decide—"

"*Mon Dieu,* it is very simple. The rogue, who was in the secrets of the defunct head clerk, guessed at his employer's position in catching a few words of the quarrel with Madame Cardot. The notary counts upon your honor and upon your delicacy, for everything is arranged. The clerk, whose conduct is excellent,—he even took upon himself the business of going to mass, a finished little hypocrite he is!—pleases the notary's wife. Cardot and you, you will remain friends. He is going to become

director in an immense financial company, he may be able to render you service. Ah! you are awaking from a beautiful dream!"

"I lose a fortune, a wife, and—"

"A mistress," said Madame Schontz, smiling, "for now that you are more than married, you will be stupid, you will wish to return to your own home, you will no longer have anything free and open, either in your clothes or in your habits; moreover, my Arthur does things very well, I should remain faithful to him and break with Malaga. Let me see her through the keyhole of the door!" demanded the lorette. "There is not," she exclaimed, "a finer animal in the desert! you are plundered! It is worthy, it is dry, it is tearful, it lacks Lady Dudley's turban."

And the lorette fled.

"What more is there?—" asked Madame de la Baudraye, whose ear had caught the rustle of a silk dress and the murmur of a woman's voice.

"There is, my angel," exclaimed Lousteau, "that we are indissolubly united.—They have just brought me a verbal answer to the letter which you saw me write and in which I broke off my marriage—"

"The party was here with whom you broke your engagement?"

"Yes."

"Oh! I shall be more than your wife, I give you my life, I wish to be your slave!"—said the poor, abused creature. "I did not believe that it was

possible for me to love you more !—I shall not then be an accident in your life, I shall be all your life ! "

" Yes, my beautiful, my noble Didine—"

" Swear to me," she went on, " that we can be separated only by death !—"

Lousteau wished to embellish his oath by his most seductive purrings. For this reason. Between the door of his apartment where he had received the lorette's kiss of farewell and that of the salon where reclined the Muse stunned by so many successive shocks, Lousteau had recalled the precarious state of the little La Baudraye, his fortune, and that speech of Bianchon's concerning Dinah : " She will be a rich widow ! " And he said to himself :

" I would rather a hundred times have Madame de la Baudraye for a wife than Félicie ! "

Therefore his decision was promptly taken. He resolved to play the part of love again with an admirable perfection. As it happened, his base scheming and his pretended violent passion brought about unfortunate results. In fact, during her journey from Sancerre to Paris, Madame de la Baudraye had planned to live in her own apartment, a few steps from Lousteau's ; but the proofs of love which her lover had just given her in renouncing so beautiful a future, and above all, the so complete happiness of the first days of this illegal marriage, prevented her from proposing this separation. The next day should be, and was, a fête in the midst of which such a proposition made *to her angel* would have produced the most horrible discord. On his

side, Lousteau, who wished to maintain Dinah in a state of dependence upon himself, kept her in a continual intoxication by means of constant festivities. These events, then, prevented these two very intelligent beings from avoiding the pit into which they fell, that of a senseless cohabitation of which, unfortunately, so many examples are to be found in Paris in the literary world.

Thus was accomplished in its full purport, the programme of love in the provinces so jestingly traced by Madame de la Baudraye to Lousteau, but which neither one nor the other remembered. Passion is deaf and dumb from birth.

This winter was then, at Paris, for Madame de la Baudraye, all that the month of October had been for her at Sancerre. Étienne, in order to initiate *his wife* into the life of Paris, mingled with this honeymoon, theatre parties, to which Dinah would go only in the *baignoire* boxes. In the beginning, Madame de la Baudraye preserved some vestiges of her provincial prudery, she was afraid of being seen, she concealed her happiness. She said: "Monsieur de Clagny, Monsieur Gravier, are quite capable of following me!" She feared Sancerre in Paris. Lousteau, whose self-love was excessive, took charge of her education, he conducted her into the best houses of the female *faiseurs,* and showed to her the young women then most in fashion, recommending them to her as models to follow. Thus the provincial exterior of Madame de la Baudraye promptly underwent a change. Lousteau, when he met his

friends, received compliments on his conquest. During this season, Étienne produced but little literature and ran considerably in debt, although the proud Dinah had paid for her toilets by her own savings and considered that she had not caused the slightest expense to her dear one. At the expiration of three months Dinah was acclimated, she had delighted herself with the music at the Italiens, she was acquainted with the repertory of all the theatres, their actors, the journals and the jests of the moment; she had become accustomed to this life of continual emotions, to this rapid current in which everything is forgotten. She no longer stretched her neck, no longer carried her nose in the air, like a statue of Astonishment, at the continual surprises which Paris offers to strangers. She knew how to breathe the air of this brilliant world, intelligent, animated, fruitful, in which the people of wit feel themselves in their element and which they can no longer leave. One morning when reading the journals, all of which Lousteau received, two lines recalled her to Sancerre and her past, two lines which were not foreign to her, and which were as follows:

"Monsieur le Baron de Clagny, procureur du roi at the tribunal of Sancerre, has been appointed deputy to the procureur-général at the royal court at Paris."

"How he loves you, that virtuous magistrate!" said the journalist, smiling.

"Poor man!" she replied. "What did I say to you? he follows me."

At this moment, Étienne and Dinah were experiencing the most brilliant and most complete phase of passion, that period in which one becomes perfectly habituated to the other, and in which, nevertheless, love preserves its savor. Each knows the other, but each is not fully comprehended, there has been no repassing in the same depths of the soul, there has been no such mutual study as to know—as happens later—the thoughts, the words, the gesture appropriated to the greatest as to the smallest event. Both are in a state of enchantment, there have been no collisions, no divergencies of opinion, no indifferent glances. The souls trend, apropos of everything, in the same direction. Thus, Dinah spoke to Lousteau in those magic words, full of expression, in those looks more magical still which all women know how to find at these moments.

"Kill me when you no longer love me.—If you should love me no longer, I believe that I could kill you and kill myself afterward."

To these delightful exaggerations, Lousteau replied:

"All that I ask of God, is to make you see my constancy. It will be you who will abandon me!"

"My love is unlimited—"

"Unlimited," repeated Lousteau. "Let us see! I am carried off by a bachelor party, I meet again one of my former mistresses, she derides me; through vanity I pretend to be a free man, and I do not return here until the next morning.—Would you love me still?"

"A woman is certain of being loved only when she is preferred, and, if you returned to me, if—Oh! you enable me to comprehend the happiness of forgiving a fault to an adored one—"

"Well, I am then loved for the first time in my life!" exclaimed Lousteau.

"You perceive it at last!" she replied.

Lousteau proposed that they should each write a letter in which they should explain the reasons which compelled them to end by suicide; and, with this letter in possession, either could kill the faithless one without danger. Notwithstanding their promises exchanged, neither one nor the other wrote the letter. Happy for the moment, the journalist promised himself to deceive Dinah at his ease when he should become weary of her, and to sacrifice everything to the exigencies of this deceiving. For him, Madame de la Baudraye was a complete fortune. Nevertheless, he was under a yoke. In marrying in this manner, Madame de la Baudraye permitted to be seen the nobility of her thoughts and that power which gives self-respect. In this complete intimacy, in which each one lays down his mask, the young woman preserved her modesty, displayed her masculine integrity and that strength peculiar to the ambitions which formed the base of her character. Lousteau therefore conceived for her an involuntary esteem. Now that she had become a Parisienne, Dinah was, moreover, superior to the most charming lorette,—she could be amusing, utter witticisms like Malaga; but her education,

the character of her mind, her extended reading, enabled her to make her wit general; while the Schontzes and the Florines exercised them only in a very circumscribed range.

"There is in Dinah," said Étienne to Bixiou, "the stuff of a Ninon and of a De Staël."

"A woman in whom is to be found a library and a seraglio, is very dangerous," answered the mocker.

When her pregnancy became visible, Madame de la Baudraye resolved not to leave the apartment; but, before shutting herself up, to take no more excursions but into the country, she wished to be present at the first representation of one of Nathan's dramas. This species of literary solemnity occupied the two thousand persons who thought themselves all Paris. Dinah, who had never seen a first representation, experienced a very natural curiosity. She had, moreover, arrived at such a degree of affection for Lousteau that she gloried in her fault; she assumed a brute strength with which to affront the world, she wished to look at it face to face, without turning her head. She wore a charming toilet, appropriate to her invalid air, to the sickly roundness and softness of her figure. Her pale skin gave her a distinguished expression, and her black hair, arranged in bandeaux, set off still more this pallor. Her sparkling gray eyes seemed more beautiful surrounded by the dark circles of fatigue. But a terrible experience was before her. By a chance common enough, the box given to the journalist was in the first tier next to that taken by Anna

Grossetête. These two intimate friends did not bow to each other and did not wish to recognize each other. At the end of the first act Lousteau left his box, leaving Dinah there alone, exposed to the fire of all the looks, to the inspection of all the opera glasses, whilst the Baronne de la Fontaine and the Comtesse Marie de Vandenesse, who had come with Anna, were receiving some of the most distinguished men in the highest circles. The solitude in which Dinah remained was a torture all the greater that she could not keep herself in countenance by examining the boxes with her lorgnette; it was in vain that she assumed a dignified and thoughtful attitude, allowing her look to dwell on vacancy, she felt herself too much the object of all eyes; she could not conceal her embarrassment, she was somewhat provincial, she displayed her handkerchief, she made, involuntarily, gestures which she had forbidden herself. Finally, in the entr'acte between the second and third acts, a man opened the door of Dinah's box! Monsieur de Clagny appeared, respectful, but sorrowful.

"I am happy to see you that I may express to you all the pleasure which your promotion gave me," she said to him.

"Eh! madame, for whom did I come to Paris?—"

"Why!" said she, "did I then have something to do with your appointment?"

"Everything. When you no longer lived in Sancerre, Sancerre became intolerable to me, I should have died there—"

"Your sincere friendship does me good," she said, offering her hand to the deputy. "I am in a situation to cherish my true friends; now I know their value— I thought I had lost your esteem; but the testimony which you give me by your visit touches me more than your ten years of attachment."

"You are the object of the curiosity of the entire audience," replied the deputy. "Ah! dear, is this your proper place? Could you not have been happy and remained honored? I have heard it said that you are the mistress of Monsieur Étienne Lousteau, that you are living together in marital relations!— You have broken with society for ever, even for the time when, if you should marry your lover, you would stand in need of that consideration which you despise to-day— Should you not be in your house, with your mother, who loves you enough to cover you with her protection? at least appearances would be preserved—"

"I am wrong in being here," she replied, "that is all. I have said adieu forever to all the advantages which the world accords to women who are able to accommodate their happiness to the conventionalities. My abnegation is so complete that I would have wished to beat down everything around me so as to make of my love a vast desert full of God, of *him* and of myself— We have made too many sacrifices for each other not to be united; united by shame, if you like, but indissolubly united— I am happy, and so happy that

I can love you at my ease, as a friend, confide in you more than in the past; for now I have need of a friend!—"

The magistrate was truly grand, and even sublime. To this declaration, in which Dinah's soul vibrated, he replied with a heartrending sound in his voice:

"I should like to go to see you in order to know if you are loved— I shall be at ease, your future will no longer affright me— Does your friend comprehend the grandeur of your sacrifices, and is there gratitude in his love?—"

"Come to the Rue des Martyrs, and you shall see!"

"Yes, I will go," he said. "I have already passed before the door without daring to ask for you. You do not yet know literature," he resumed. "Certainly there are to be found glorious exceptions; but these men of letters are followed by unheard of evils, amongst which I count in the first rank the publicity which brands everything! A wife commits a fault with—"

"A procureur du roi," said the baroness, smiling.

"Well, after a rupture, there are some resources, the world has learned nothing; but, with a man more or less celebrated, the public has heard everything. Eh! see— what an example have you here under your eyes. You are back to back with the Comtesse Marie de Vandenesse, who has all but committed the last follies for a man more celebrated than Lousteau, for Nathan, and now they are sepa-

rated to the point of not recognizing each other—After having gone to the very edge of the gulf, the countess was saved, no one knows how, she left neither her husband nor her house; but as it concerned a celebrated man, she was talked of during a whole winter. Had it not been for the great fortune, the great name and the position of her husband, had it not been for the wise conduct of this statesman, who displayed, it is said, the greatest consideration for his wife, she would have been lost,—no other wife could have remained honored as she is—"

"How was Sancerre when you left it?" asked Madame de la Baudraye, to change the conversation.

"Monsieur de la Baudraye said that your delayed pregnancy required that your delivery should take place in Paris, and that he had desired that you should go there to be under the care of the princes of the science of medicine," replied the deputy, readily divining what Dinah wished to know. "Thus, notwithstanding the uproar which your departure occasioned, up to this evening you were still *within the law.*"

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "Monsieur de la Baudraye still preserves hopes?"

"Your husband, madame, has done as he always does,—he calculated."

The magistrate left the box as he saw the journalist enter, and he bowed to him politely.

"You are having more of a success than the piece has," said Étienne to Dinah.

This brief moment of triumph gave more pleasure to this woman than she had had during her whole provincial life; but, when she came out of the theatre, she was thoughtful.

"What is the matter, my Didine?" asked Lousteau.

"I am asking myself how a woman can rise superior to the world's opinion."

"There are two ways,—be Madame de Staël, or possess two hundred thousand francs of income."

"Society," she said, "has its hold upon us through vanity, through the desire for appearance—Bah! we will be philosophers."

*

This evening was the last blaze of the deceitful comfort in which Madame de la Baudraye had been living since her arrival in Paris. Three days later, she perceived a cloud on Lousteau's forehead,—he was taking turns around the lawn of his little garden while smoking a cigar. This woman, whom the mode of life followed by the little La Baudraye had familiarized with the habit and the pleasure of never being in debt, now learned that her household was without funds in presence of two quarters' rent due, on the eve, in fact, of *a writ!* This stern reality of the Parisian life pierced Dinah's heart like a thorn ; she repented of having led Lousteau into the dissipations of love. It is so difficult to pass from pleasure to work that happiness has devoured more poesies than misfortune has ever made spring up in luminous jets. Happy in seeing Étienne at his ease, smoking a cigar after his déjeuner, his countenance expanded, stretched out like a lizard in the sun, Dinah had never found the courage to make herself the official summoning him to new labors. She now conceived the plan of pawning, by means of the Sieur Migeon, Paméla's father, the few jewels

which she possessed, and on which *my aunt*, for she was beginning to speak the language of the quarter, lent her nine hundred francs. She kept three hundred francs for her baby linen, for the expenses of her lying-in, and joyfully handed the required sum to Lousteau, who was laboriously cultivating, furrow by furrow, or, if you prefer, line by line, a novel for a review.

"My kitten," she said to him, "finish your novel without sacrificing anything to necessity, polish your style, dig out your subject. I have played the lady too much, I am going to be a bourgeoise and manage the household."

For the last four months, Étienne had been taking Dinah to dine at the Café Riche, in a private cabinet reserved for them. The woman from the provinces was appalled to learn that Étienne was in debt there in the sum of five hundred francs for the last two weeks.

"What! we drink wine at six francs a bottle! a Normandy sole costs a hundred sous!— A roll of bread twenty centimes!—" she cried, reading the bill which the journalist extended toward her.

"But, to be robbed by a restaurant-keeper or by a cook, there is very little difference between them for us," said Lousteau.

"Henceforth, for the price of these dinners, you shall live like a prince."

After having obtained from the landlord a kitchen and two rooms for servants, Madame de la Baudraye wrote two lines to her mother to ask her for some

linen and a loan of a thousand francs; she received two trunks full of linen, some silverware, two thousand francs, by an honest and pious woman cook whom her mother sent her. Ten days after the evening at the theatre where they had met, Monsieur de Clagny came to see Madame de la Baudraye at four o'clock, after he had left the Palais, and he found her embroidering a little cap. The sight of this woman, so proud, so ambitious, whose mind was so cultivated, who was so well enthroned in the Château d'Anzy, fallen to household cares and to sewing for the infant that was to come, greatly affected the poor magistrate who had just left the court of assizes. When he saw the needle-prickings on one of those tapering fingers that he had kissed, he comprehended that Madame de la Baudraye did not make of this occupation merely a recreation of maternal love. During his first interview, the magistrate read Dinah's soul. This perspicacity in a man whose affections are engaged required a superhuman effort. He discovered that Dinah wished to make herself the good genius of the journalist, to set him in a noble path; she had inferred some moral disorder from the difficulties of material life. Between two beings united by a love so sincere on one side and so well simulated on the other, more than one confidence had been exchanged in the course of four months. Notwithstanding the care with which Étienne screened himself, more than one word had enlightened Dinah on the antecedents of this spendthrift whose talent had been so cramped by poverty,

so perverted by bad examples, so thwarted by difficulties superior to his courage. "He will develop in prosperity," she had said to herself. And she wished to give him happiness, security in his own household, by the economy and the spirit of order familiar to those born in the provinces. Dinah became a housekeeper as she had become a poet, by an impulse of her soul toward higher things.

"His happiness shall be my absolution."

This phrase, which the magistrate drew out from Madame de la Baudraye, explained the actual state of affairs. The publicity which Étienne had given his triumph on the night of the first representation had sufficiently laid bare the journalist's intentions to the magistrate's eyes. For Étienne, Madame de la Baudraye was, to adopt the English expression, a sufficiently fine feather in his cap. Far from appreciating the charms of a mysterious and timid love, of concealing so great a happiness from all the world, he experienced all a parvenu's enjoyment in adorning himself with the first *comme il faut* woman who had honored him with her love. Nevertheless, the magistrate was for some time deceived by the attentions which every man displays toward a woman in the situation in which Madame de la Baudraye now found herself and which Lousteau rendered charming by the wheedlings peculiar to men whose manners are naturally agreeable. There are men, in fact, who are born with a touch of the monkey in them, to whom the imitations of the most charming evidences of feeling come so naturally, that the actor is no

longer to be discerned in them; and the natural disposition of the Sancerrois had been very much developed by the scenes in which he had lived up to the present time. Between the month of April and the month of July, the period at which Dinah was to be brought to bed, she discovered why Lousteau had not overcome poverty,—he was indolent and lacking in will-power. It is true that the brain obeys only its own laws, it recognizes neither the necessities of life nor the commands of honor; a great work is not produced because a wife is dying, or in order to pay dishonoring debts, or to bring up children; nevertheless, there are no great talents without a strong will. These twin forces are indispensable to the construction of the immense edifice of glory. The truly superior men maintain their brains in such condition as to be capable of production, just as formerly a paladin kept his arms always polished. They overcome indolence, they deny themselves enervating pleasures, or yield to them only in proportion to the limit allowed by the extent of their faculties. In this manner are to be explained Scribe, Rossini, Walter Scott, Cuvier, Voltaire, Newton, Buffon, Bayle, Bossuet, Leibnitz, Lope de Vega, Calderon, Boccaccio, Aretino, Aristotle, in short, all those who entertain, instruct or lead their epoch. The will can and should be a source of pride much more than talent. If talent has its germ in a cultivated predisposition, will is a conquest made at every moment over the instincts, over the inclinations conquered, trodden under foot, over

whims and obstacles vanquished, over difficulties of every sort heroically overcome. His indulgence in cigars contributed to Lousteau's laziness. If tobacco lulls vexation, it infallibly dulls energy. All that the cigar extinguished in the physical, the spirit of criticism annihilated in the mental condition of this man, so disposed to pleasure. Criticism is as fatal for the critic as the for and against is for the lawyer. In this avocation, the mind contradicts itself, the intelligence loses its rectilinear lucidity. The writer exists only by means of opinions formed. Thus there should be distinguished two criticisms, in the same way as in painting we recognize the art and the technique. To criticise in the manner of the greater number of the actual feuilletonists, that is merely to express such and such judgments in a more or less clever fashion, just as an advocate pleads at the Palais the most contradictory causes. The *faiseurs* always find a theme to develop in the work which they are analyzing. Done in this manner, this trade is suited to the idle souls, to those deprived of the sublime faculty of imagining, or who, possessing it, have not the courage to cultivate it. Every theatrical piece, every book, becomes under their pens a subject which costs their imagination no effort, and on which the report is written, jestingly or seriously, according to the whim of the passions of the moment. As for the judgment, whatever it may be, it is always justifiable for the French intelligence, which lends itself admirably to the for and against. Conscience is so little consulted, these

bravoes use their judgment so little, that they will praise in the foyer of a theatre the work which they rend in their article. They have been seen passing, if needs be, from one journal to another without taking the trouble to protest that the opinions of the new feuilleton are diametrically opposed to those of the old one. Besides, Madame de la Baudraye smiled on seeing Lousteau produce a legitimist article and a dynastic article on the same event. She applauded this maxim pronounced by him: "We are the attorneys of public opinion!—" The other style of criticism is a complete science, it exacts a complete comprehension of the works, a clear view of the tendencies of an epoch, the adoption of a system, a faith in certain principles; that is to say, a jurisprudence, a report, a decree. This critic then becomes the magistrate of ideas, the censor of his time, he exercises a priesthood; whilst the other is an acrobat who performs tricks to earn his living, so long as he has legs. Between Claude Vignon and Lousteau there was the distance which separates a trade from art. Dinah, whose mind speedily lost its rustiness and whose intelligence had breadth, had soon arrived at a literary judgment of her idol. She saw Lousteau working at the last moment, under the most dishonoring exactions, and *scumbling* as the painters say of a work which lacks careful definition; but she justified him by saying to herself: "He is a poet!" so much need had she of justifying herself in her own eyes. In divining this secret of the literary life of so many, she divined that Lous-

teau's pen would never be an unfailing resource. Love caused her then to undertake something to which she would never have descended on her own account. Through her mother she opened negotiations with her husband in order to obtain an allowance from him, but unknown to Lousteau, whose delicacy, as she thought, must be considered. Some days before the end of July, Dinah crumpled up in anger the letter in which her mother brought to her the definite reply of the little La Baudraye :

"Madame de la Baudraye has no need of an allowance in Paris when she has the most beautiful life in the world at her Château d'Anzy,—let her return to it."

Lousteau picked up the letter and read it.

"I will avenge you," he said to Madame de la Baudraye in that sinister tone which pleases women so much when their antipathies are encouraged.

Five days later, Bianchon and Duriau, the celebrated *accoucheur*, were established in Lousteau's house, for he, since the reply of the little La Baudraye, had paraded his happiness and made a display over the accouchement of Dinah. Monsieur de Clagny and Madame Piédefer, summoned in haste, were the godfather and godmother of the expected infant, for the prudent magistrate feared to see some grave error committed by Lousteau. Madame de la Baudraye gave birth to a boy who might have made envious queens desirous of an heir-presumptive. Bianchon, accompanied by Monsieur de Clagny, went to have this child recorded at the bureau of

births as the son of Monsieur and Madame de la Baudraye, unknown to Étienne, who, on his side, hastened to the printer's and had this notice struck off :

Madame la Baronne de la Baudraye has been happily delivered of a son.

Monsieur Étienne Lousteau has the pleasure of notifying you thereof.

The mother and the child are doing well.

A first delivery of sixty notices had been made for Lousteau, when Monsieur de Clagny, who had called to inquire after the accouchée, happened to see the list of persons in Sancerre to whom Lousteau proposed to send this remarkable notification, written under the sixty Parisians who were to receive them. The magistrate seized the list and the remainder of the notices ; he showed them at first to Madame Piédefer, telling her not to permit Lousteau to recommence this infamous jest, and he threw himself into a cabriolet. The devoted magistrate ordered from the same printer another notice, in these terms :

Madame la Baronne de la Baudraye has been happily delivered of a son.

Monsieur le Baron de la Baudraye has the honor of notifying you thereof.

The mother and the child are doing well.

After having caused to be destroyed the proofs, the setting-up, everything that could bear witness to the existence of this first notice, Monsieur de Clagny started out to intercept those already sent

out; many of them he changed in the porters' lodges, he obtained the restoration of some thirty; finally, after three days of running about, there remained in existence only one of these notices, that of Nathan. The magistrate had returned five times to the house of this celebrated man without being able to meet him. When, after having asked for an appointment, Monsieur de Clagny was finally received, the anecdote of the notification had spread all over Paris. Some saw in it one of those clever calumnies, a species of injury to which are subject all reputations, even the ephemeral ones. Others affirmed that they had read the notice, and had restored it to a friend of the La Baudraye family. Very many railed loudly against the immorality of journalists, so that this last existing notice had become quite a curiosity. Florine, with whom Nathan was living, had shown it to him post-marked, delivered by the post, and bearing the address written by Étienne. Therefore when the magistrate spoke of this notification, Nathan began to smile.

"Give back to you this monument of stupidity and of childishness?" he exclaimed. "This autograph is one of those arms of which an athlete in the arena should never deprive himself. This note demonstrates that Lousteau is wanting in heart, in good taste, in dignity, that he is acquainted neither with the world nor with public morality, that he insults himself when he knows of no one else to insult— It is only the son of a bourgeois come from

Sancerre to be a poet and who makes of himself the *bravo* of the first review that comes along who could send out such a notification! You must admit it,— this, monsieur, is a document required for the archives of our epoch. To-day, Lousteau fawns upon me; to-morrow, he may demand my head— Ah! forgive this jest, I did not remember that you are a deputy procureur. I have entertained in my heart a passion for a great lady, and one as much superior to Madame de la Baudraye as your delicacy, on your side, monsieur, is above the boyish folly of Lousteau; but I would die before uttering her name— A few months of her gentleness and her graceful ways cost me a hundred thousand francs and my future; but I do not think that I paid too dearly for them!— And I have never pitied myself!— That the women should betray the secret of their passion, that is their last offering to love; but that we should do so—it requires nothing less than a Lousteau for that! No, not for a thousand écus would I give up this paper."

"Monsieur," said the magistrate finally, after an oratorical contest of a half-hour's duration, "I have interviewed on this subject fifteen or sixteen men of letters, and you are the only one inaccessible to sentiments of honor!— It is not a question here of Étienne Lousteau, but of a woman and a child who are both in ignorance of the wrong that has been done them, to their fortune, to their future, to their honor. Who knows, monsieur, if you may not some day be obliged to ask of justice some

favor for a friend, for some one whose honor is more to you than your own? Justice may then remember that you have been pitiless— A man such as you, can he hesitate?" said the magistrate.

"I wished to make you conscious of the full value of my sacrifice," Nathan replied, delivering the note as he reflected upon the magistrate's position and in accepting this species of bargain.

When the folly of the journalist had been repaired, Monsieur de Clagny came to deliver him a strong rebuke in the presence of Madame Piédefer; but he found Lousteau very much irritated at these proceedings.

"That which I did, monsieur," replied Étienne, "was done intentionally. Monsieur de la Baudraye has sixty thousand francs of income, and refuses an allowance to his wife; I wished to make him feel that I was the master of this child."

"Eh! monsieur, I suspected you," replied the magistrate. "Therefore I took pains to have myself made god-father of the little Polydore, he is inscribed on the civil registers as son of the Baron and the Baroness de la Baudraye, and, if you have the bowels of a father, you should be happy to know that the infant is the heir to one of the finest majorats in France."

"Well, monsieur, must the mother die of hunger?"

"Be easy, monsieur," said the magistrate bitterly, having drawn from Lousteau's heart the ex-

pression of the sentiment of which the proof had been so long waited for, "I will take charge of this negotiation with Monsieur de la Baudraye."

And Monsieur de Clagny departed with death in his heart. Dinah, his idol, was loved from interested motives! would not her eyes be opened too late?

"Poor woman!" said the magistrate to himself as he went away.

Let us do him this justice, for to whom should it be done if not to a deputy-procureur? he loved Dinah too sincerely to see in the abasement of this woman a means of triumphing by it some day, he was all compassion, all devotion,—he loved her.

The cares required for the nursing of the infant, the infant's cries, the rest necessary for the mother during the first days, the presence of Madame Piédefer, all conspired so effectively against the literary labors, that Lousteau installed himself in the three chambers rented on the first floor by the devout old lady. The journalist, obliged to go to the first representations without Dinah, and separated from her for the greater part of the time, found I know not what attraction in the exercise of his liberty. More than once he allowed himself to be taken by the arm and led off to some joyous party. More than once he found himself again in the midst of Bohemia in the house of some friend's lorette. He met again women in brilliant youthfulness, splendidly apparelled, and to whom economy would have appeared like a negation of their youth and their power.

Dinah, notwithstanding the marvellous beauty which she displayed at the period of her third month of nursing, could not sustain the comparison with these flowers so soon faded, but so beautiful during the moments in which they lived with their roots in opulence. Nevertheless, the domestic life had great attractions for Étienne. In the space of three months, the mother and the daughter, aided by the cook brought from Sancerre and by the little Paméla, gave an entirely new aspect to the apartment. The journalist there found his déjeuner, his dinner served with a sort of luxury. Dinah, handsome and well dressed, was careful to anticipate the wants of her dear Étienne, who felt himself indeed the head of the house, in which everything, even the child, was subordinated, so to speak, to his egoism. The tenderness of Dinah displayed itself in the smallest things, it was then impossible for Lousteau not to continue the charming deceptions of his feigned passion. Dinah, however, foresaw, in the exterior life into which Lousteau allowed himself to be drawn, a cause of ruin for her love and for the household. After ten months of nursing she weaned her son, restored her mother to the apartment Étienne had been occupying, and re-established that intimacy which binds indissolubly a man to a woman, when a woman is loving and charming. One of the most striking features of the novel by Benjamin Constant, and one of the explanations of the abandonment of Ellénore, is this default of daily, or nightly, if you prefer, intimacy between her and Adolphe. Each of the two lovers

has a separate lodging, both have obeyed the worldly conventionalities, they have preserved appearances. Ellénore, left alone at regular periods, is obliged to make the greatest demonstrations of tenderness to drive away the thoughts of liberty which assail Adolphe when outside. The perpetual exchange of looks and of thoughts in the life in common gives such arms to women that, in order to abandon them, a man must oppose much better reasons than they will ever furnish so long as they love. This was an entirely new period both for Étienne and for Dinah. She wished to be necessary to him, she wished to render energy to this man whose weakness smiled upon her, she saw security in so doing,—she found him subjects, she sketched the designs on his canvas; at need, she wrote for him entire chapters; she rejuvenated the veins of this talent in its last agonies by fresh blood, she gave him his ideas and his opinions. In the end, she produced two books which had a success. More than once she saved the self-love of Étienne, in despair at finding himself without ideas, by dictating to him, by correcting or finishing his feuilletons. The secret of this collaboration was guarded inviolably,—Madame Piédefer knew nothing of it. This mental galvanism was recompensed by a surplus of receipts which permitted the household to live comfortably until the end of the year 1838. Lousteau became accustomed to seeing his task accomplished by Dinah, and he paid her, as the common people say in their energetic language, *in mon-*

key money.* These outlays of devotion become a treasure to which the generous souls attach themselves, and, the more she gave, the more Madame de la Baudraye loved Lousteau,—thus there very soon came a moment in which he cost Dinah too much for her ever to be able to renounce him. But she became pregnant a second time. The year was terrible to live through. Notwithstanding the cares of the two women, Lousteau contracted debts; he exceeded his strength in the effort to pay them by his labor during Dinah's lying-in, and she thought him heroic, so well she knew him! After this effort, terrified at having two women, two children, two domestics, he considered himself as incapable of combating with his pen to support a family, when alone he had not been able to make a living. He permitted, then, things to go as they would. This unfeeling schemer over-acted the part of a lover at home so as to have more liberty outside. The proud Dinah sustained the burden of this existence alone. This thought: "*He* loves me!" gave her supernatural strength. She worked as worked only the most vigorous talents of that epoch. At the risk of losing her freshness and her health, Didine was for Lousteau what Mademoiselle Delachaux was for Gardane in Diderot's magnificent true tale. But, in sacrificing herself, she committed the sublime fault of sacrificing her toilet. She had all her dresses re-dyed, she no longer wore anything but

* *Payer en monnaie de singe*—literally *to pay in monkey-money*, means to laugh at a person instead of paying him.

black.—She smelt of black, as Malaga said, with much derision of Lousteau. Toward the end of the year 1839, Étienne, following the example of Louis XV., had arrived by successive and gradual capitulations of conscience at establishing a distinction between his own purse and that of the household, as Louis XV. distinguished between his secret treasury and his privy purse. He deceived Dinah as to the amount of the receipts. When she perceived these deficiencies, Madame de la Baudraye suffered atrociously from jealousy. She wished to lead boldly the life of the world and the literary life together, she accompanied the journalist to all the first representations, and detected in him movements of offended self-love, for the black of her toilet came off on him, darkened his countenance and rendered him sometimes brutal. Playing, in his own household, the woman's part, he assumed its unreasonable exactions,—he reproached Dinah with the want of freshness in her appearance, while all the time profiting by this sacrifice which costs so much to a mistress; exactly like a woman who, after having ordered you to pass through a sewer in order to save her honor, says to you when you come out: "I do not like mud!" Dinah was then obliged to gather up the reins, which till then had been lying loose, of that authority which all witty and intelligent women exercise over people without strength of will. But in doing this she lost much of her mental brilliancy. The suspicions which she allowed to be perceived, draw down upon women

quarrels in which the want of respect begins, because they descend themselves from the heights on which they originally stationed themselves. Then she made concessions. Thus Lousteau was allowed to receive several of his friends, Nathan, Bixiou, Blondet, Finot, whose manners, whose discourse, whose conduct were depraving. They endeavored to persuade Madame de la Baudraye that her principles, her repugnances, were a remnant of provincial prudery. Finally, they preached to her the code of feminine superiority. Presently her jealousy furnished arms against herself. At the carnival of 1840, she disguised herself, went to the Opéra ball, to some suppers where there were lorettes, in order to follow Étienne in all his amusements. On the day of the Mi-carême, or rather on the next day, at eight o'clock in the morning, Dinah in disguise reached her apartment, returning from the ball in order to go to bed. She had been spying on Lousteau, who, thinking her ill, had disposed of his mi-carême in favor of Fanny Beaupré. The journalist, warned by a friend, had behaved himself in such a manner as to deceive the poor woman, who asked for nothing better than to be deceived. As she descended from her hackney coach, Dinah encountered Monsieur de la Baudraye, to whom the porter pointed her out. The little old man said coldly to his wife, taking her by the arm :

" Is it you, madame ? "

This apparition of the conjugal authority, before which she felt so small, and especially this phrase,

almost froze the heart of this poor creature, surprised in her waterman's costume. In order to better escape Étienne's notice, Dinah had taken a disguise under which he would not be likely to look for her. She took advantage of the fact that she was still masked, to flee without replying, went to change her costume and then ascended to her mother's apartment, where Monsieur de la Baudraye was waiting for her. Notwithstanding her dignified air, she blushed in the presence of the little old man.

"What do you wish with me, monsieur?" she asked. "Are we not separated for ever?"

"In fact, yes," replied Monsieur de la Baudraye; "but legally, no—"

Madame Piédefer was making signs to her daughter, which Dinah finally perceived and comprehended.

"There is nothing but your own interests that could bring you here," she said bitterly.

"Our interests," replied the little man coldly, "for we have children— Your uncle, Silas Piédefer, has died in New York, where, after having made and lost several fortunes in various countries, he has left something like seven or eight hundred thousand francs, it is said twelve hundred thousand francs; but it is a question of realizing on merchandise— I am the head of the community, I exercise your rights."

"Oh!" exclaimed Dinah, "in everything relating to business affairs I have confidence only in Monsieur de Clagny; he knows the law, you can

come to an understanding with him; whatever he does will be well done."

"I have no need of Monsieur de Clagny," said Monsieur de la Baudraye, "to withdraw from you my children."

"Your children!" cried Dinah, "your children to whom you have never sent a farthing! your children!—"

She added only a great burst of laughter, but the impassibility of the little La Baudraye threw ice upon this explosion.

"Madame your mother has shown them to me, they are charming, I do not wish to be separated from them, and I will take them away to our Château d'Anzy," said Monsieur de la Baudraye, "if it were only to save them from the sight of their mother disguised as are disguised the—"

"Enough!" said Madame de la Baudraye imperiously. "What did you wish with me in coming here?"

"A power-of-attorney to receive the inheritance of our uncle Silas—"

Dinah took a pen, wrote two lines to Monsieur de Clagny and told her husband to return in the evening. At five o'clock the avocat-général, for Monsieur de Clagny had received advancement, enlightened Madame de la Baudraye on her position; but he took upon himself the charge of regulating everything by making a compromise with the little old man, who had been brought thither by avarice only. Monsieur de la Baudraye, to whom his wife's

power of attorney was indispensable to enable him to act in her name, purchased it by the following concessions,—he engaged, in the first place, to make to his wife an annual allowance of ten thousand francs, so long as it pleased her, as it was stated in the deed, to live in Paris; but when the children attained the age of six years they were to be delivered to Monsieur de la Baudraye. Finally, the magistrate obtained a preliminary payment of a year's allowance. The little La Baudraye who came to say adieu gallantly to his wife and his children, appeared in a little white rubber overcoat. He was so firm on his legs and so very similar to the La Baudraye of 1836, that Dinah despaired of ever interring this terrible dwarf. From the garden in which he was smoking a cigar, the journalist saw Monsieur de la Baudraye during the time that this insect took to cross the court; but this was enough for Lousteau, it seemed to him to be evident that the little man had determined to destroy all the hopes with which his death might have inspired his wife. This scene, brief as it was, changed greatly the secret dispositions of the journalist. While smoking a second cigar, Étienne reflected seriously upon his position; his connection with the Baronne de la Baudraye had, up to the present time, cost him just as much money as it had her. To make use of a commercial expression, the accounts were exactly balanced. Having regard to the smallness of his fortune, to the difficulty with which he earned money, Lousteau considered himself as morally the creditor.

Assuredly the hour was favorable for leaving this woman. Wearied with playing for almost three years a comedy which would never become with him a habit, he was perpetually disguising his ennui. This spendthrift, accustomed to no dissimulation, imposed upon himself in the domestic circle a smile similar to that of the debtor before the creditor. This obligation became from day to day more burdensome for him. Up to this time the immense interest which the future promised had given him strength; but, when he saw the little La Baudraye setting out as lightly for the United States as if it were a question of taking the steamboat to Rouen, he no longer believed in the future. He re-entered from the garden into the elegant salon in which Dinah had just received her husband's adieux.

"Étienne," said Madame de la Baudraye, "do you know what my lord and master has just proposed to me? In case it should please me to live at Anzy during his absence, he has given his orders, and he hopes that the good advice of my mother will decide me to return thither with my children—"

"The advice is excellent," replied Lousteau dryly, he knowing Dinah well enough to be aware of the passionate response which she wished, and for which she supplicated, moreover, by a look.

This tone, the accent, the indifferent glance, all struck so keenly this woman who lived only by her love, that she allowed to flow from her eyes down her cheeks two great tears without replying, and Lousteau only perceived them at the moment when

she took her handkerchief to dry these two pearls of sorrow.

"What is it, Didine?" he said, touched to the heart by this sensitive quickness.

"At the moment when I was applauding myself for having secured our liberty forever," she said, "—at the cost of my fortune!—by selling—that which a mother holds the most precious—her children!—for he takes them from me when they are six years old—and, in order to see them it will be necessary to return to Sancerre!—a torture!—Ah! *Mon Dieu!* what have I done?"

Lousteau placed himself at Dinah's knees and kissed her hands, lavishing upon her his most caressing wheedlings.

"You do not understand me," he said. "I sit in judgment on myself, and I am not worth all these sacrifices, my dear angel. I am, speaking literally, a very second-rate man. The day on which I can no longer make a parade at the bottom of the pages of the journals with my feuilletons, the editors of the public prints will abandon me, like an old slipper thrown away in the corner of an alley. Think of it! we are tight-rope dancers, we have no pension to retire upon! There would be found too many talented people to pension, if the State should enter upon that species of benevolence! I am forty-two years old, I have become as sluggish as a marmot. I am conscious of it: my love"—he kissed her hand very tenderly—"can only become an injury to you. I lived, as you know, with Florine when I was but

twenty-two ; but that which is excusable at an early age, that which then seems pretty, charming, is dishonoring at forty. Up to this time we have shared between us the burden of our existence, it has not been beautiful for the last eighteen months. Through devotion to me, you go about dressed all in black, which does not do me honor—"

Dinah made one of these magnificent movements of the shoulders which are worth all the discourses in the world—

"Yes," said Étienne, continuing, "you sacrifice everything to my convenience, even your beauty. And I, my heart worn out by struggles, my soul filled with evil presentiments for my future, I do not recompense your soothing love by an equal love. We have been very happy, without any clouds, for a long time—Well, I do not wish to see so beautiful a poem end badly, am I wrong ?—"

Madame de la Baudraye loved Étienne so much that this wisdom, worthy of Monsieur de Clagny, gave her pleasure, and dried her tears.

"He loves me then for myself alone !" she said to herself, looking at him with smiling eyes.

After four years of intimacy, this woman's love had ended by reuniting all the various shades discovered by our spirit of analysis and which modern society has created ; Beyle—Stendhal—one of the most remarkable men of this period, whose recent loss still affects the world of letters, has been the first to characterize them perfectly. Lousteau produced in Dinah that lively commotion, explicable

by magnetism, which disarranges all the forces of the soul and the body, which destroys every principle of resistance in women. A look from Lousteau, his hand placed upon hers, rendered Dinah very obedient. A gentle word, a smile from this man, made the soul of this poor woman to flower, he moved or saddened her by the caress or by the coldness in his eyes; when he gave her his arm in walking at her pace, in the street or on the boulevard, she was so absorbed in him that she lost the consciousness of her own identity. Charmed by the wit, magnetized by the manners of this spendthrift, she saw in his vices only slight defects. She loved the puffs of cigar smoke which the wind brought to her in her chamber from the garden, far from making any grimaces over them, she went to inhale them, she concealed herself that she might enjoy them. She hated the publishers or the director of the journal who refused Lousteau money, objecting to the enormity of the advances already made. She went so far as to understand that this bohemian might write a novel the price of which was to be received, instead of giving it in return for a payment long since made. Such is doubtless the veritable love, it comprehends all the manners of loving,—love of the heart, love of the head, love-passion, love-caprice, love-taste, according to the definitions of Beyle. Didine loved so well that at certain moments, when her critical sense, so just, so continually exercised since her coming to Paris, enabled her to see clearly into

Lousteau's soul, passion overcame reason and suggested to her excuses.

"And I," she replied to him, "what am I? a woman who has put herself outside of the world. When I fail in woman's honor, why should you not sacrifice to me a little of man's honor? Are we not living outside of the social conventionalities? Why not accept from me that which Nathan accepts from Florine? We will count it up when we leave each other, and—you know!—death alone shall separate us. Your honor, Étienne, is my felicity; as mine is my constancy and your happiness. If I do not render you happy, everything is said. If I give you a pain, condemn me. Our debts are paid, we have ten thousand francs of income, and we shall readily earn, between us, eight thousand francs a year.—*I will do a theatre piece!* With fifteen hundred francs a month, shall we not be as rich as the Rothschilds? Be easy. Now I shall have delicious toilets, I will give you every day pleasures of vanity, as on the day of the first representation of Nathan's—"

"And your mother, who goes every day to mass, who wishes to bring you a priest and to cause you to renounce your mode of life?"

"Every one to his own vice. You smoke, she preaches to me, poor woman! but she takes care of the children, she takes them out to walk, she is of an absolute devotion, she idolizes me; would you wish to prevent her from weeping?—"

"What will be said of me?"

"But we do not live for the world!" she exclaimed, raising Étienne and making him take a seat beside her. "Moreover, some day, we shall be married—we have in our favor the chances of the sea—"

"I did not think of that!" cried Lousteau ingenuously, and he said to himself: "There will be plenty of time to break off when the little La Baudraye returns."

From this day Lousteau lived luxuriously; Dinah was able to rival, on the nights of the first representations, the best dressed women in Paris. Cherished by this domestic happiness, Lousteau fatuously assumed with his friends the character of a man worn-out, wearied, ruined by Madame de la Baudraye.

"Oh! how I should love the friend who would deliver me of Dinah! But no one will succeed in doing it," he said, "she loves me enough to throw herself out of the window if I should tell her to do so."

The journalist caused himself to be pitied, he took precautions against Dinah's jealousy whenever he accepted an invitation. Finally he committed infidelities without shame. When Monsieur de Clagny, in sincere despair at seeing Dinah in a situation so dishonoring, when she might have been so rich, so highly placed, and at the moment in which her early ambitions were about to be accomplished, came to her to say: "You are deceived!" she replied:

"I know it."

The magistrate was stupefied. He recovered his speech to make an observation.

"Do you love me still?" Madame de la Baudraye asked him, interrupting him at the first word.

"Enough to ruin myself for you!—" he exclaimed, rising upon his feet.

The eyes of the poor man became like torches, he trembled like a leaf, he felt his larynx immovable, his hair stirred at its roots, he believed in the happiness of being taken by his idol as an avenger, and this makeshift rendered him almost crazy with joy.

"At what are you surprised then?" she said to him, causing him to resume his seat, "that is how I love."

The magistrate then comprehended this argument *ad hominem!* And he had tears in his eyes, he who had just condemned a man to death! Lousteau's satiety, that horrible dénoûment of concubinage, had betrayed itself in a thousand little things which are like grains of sand thrown against the windows of the magic pavilion in which one dreams when one loves. These grains of sand which become pebbles, Dinah had only perceived when they had acquired the size of stones. Madame de la Baudraye had ended by thoroughly judging Lousteau.

"He is," she said to her mother, "a poet without any defence against unhappiness, weak through indolence and not through want of heart, a little too yielding to voluptuousness; in short, he is a cat

that you cannot hate. What would become of him without me? I prevented his marriage, he has no longer any future. His talent would perish in poverty."

"Oh! my Dinah!" Madame Piédefer had cried, "in what a hell are you living?— What is the sentiment that will give you the strength to persist?—"

"I will be his mother!" she had said.

There are horrible positions in which we take no decision until the moment when our friends perceive our dishonor. We make an agreement with ourselves, so long as we escape from a censor who will act as the procureur du roi. Monsieur de Clagny, awkward as a *patito,* had just become Dinah's executioner!

"I shall be, to preserve my love, that which Madame de Pompadour was to maintain her power," she said to herself when Monsieur de Clagny had departed.

This speech revealed clearly enough that her love had become heavy to carry, and that it was going to be a labor instead of being a pleasure.

The new rôle adopted by Dinah was terribly painful, but Lousteau did not make it easy to play. When he wished to go out after dinner, he played little scenes of ravishing friendship, he said to Dinah words that were truly full of tenderness, he took his companion by the chain and, when he had bruised her in all the old wounds, the royal ingrate said: "Have I hurt you?" These lying caresses, these

disguisements, had sometimes consequences that were dishonoring for Dinah, who believed in the returns of tenderness. Alas! the mother ceded her place to Didine with a shameful facility. She felt herself like a plaything in the hands of this man, and she ended by saying: "Very well, I wish to be his plaything!" finding in it edged pleasures, the enjoyments of the damned. When this woman, whose spirit was so virile, took refuge by her thoughts in solitude, she felt her courage fail. She preferred the torments foreseen, inevitable, of this cruel intimacy, to the deprivation of enjoyments so much the more exquisite that they were born in the midst of remorses, of frightful struggles with herself, of *noes* which changed into *ayes!* It was at every moment the drop of brackish water found in the desert, drunk with more delight than the traveller would experience in tasting the choicest wines on the tables of a prince. When Dinah said to herself at midnight: "Will he come home? Will he not come home?" she revived only at the familiar sound of Étienne's boots, she recognized his peculiar knock. Frequently she endeavored to make use of her voluptuousness as of a curb, she thought it worth while to contest with her rivals, to leave them nothing in this satiated heart. How many times did she play the tragedy of the *Last Day of a Condemned Man*, saying to herself: "To-morrow, we will leave each other!" And how many times did a word, a look, a caress full of ingenuousness, cause her to fall back again into love! This was often terrible!

She wandered more than once around the question of suicide, as she wandered around this Parisian lawn where grew the pale flowers !— She had not, in short, exhausted the immense treasure of devotion and of love which loving women carry in their hearts.

The romance of *Adolphe* was her Bible, she studied it ; for, above everything else, she wished not to be Ellénore. She avoided tears, kept herself from all the bitternesses so knowingly described by the critic to whom we owe the analysis of this poignant work, and whose commentary seemed to Dinah to be almost superior to the book. Thus she often re-read the magnificent article by the sole critic which the *Revue des Deux Mondes* had had, and which may be found at the beginning of the new edition of *Adolphe*.

"'No,'" she said to herself, repeating its fatal words, "'no, I will not give to my prayers the form of a command, I will not fly to tears as to a vengeance, I will not judge the actions which I formerly approved unreservedly, I will not follow his steps with a curious eye ; if he escape, on his return he shall not find an imperious mouth, whose kiss shall be an order admitting of no response. No ! my silence shall not be a complaint, and my speech shall not be a quarrel !—' I will not be commonplace," she said to herself, placing upon the table the little yellow volume which had already procured her this speech from Lousteau : "What, you are reading *Adolphe !*" "Shall I not have a day in which he will recognize my value and in which he will say :

'Never did the victim cry out,'—that will be enough! Moreover, the others will only have moments, and I, I shall have his whole life!"

In thinking himself authorized by his wife's conduct to punish her at the domestic tribunal, Monsieur de la Baudraye had the delicacy to rob her in order to accomplish his great enterprise of bringing under cultivation the twelve hundred hectares of heath, to which, since 1836, he had been devoting his revenues, while living like a rat. He manipulated so skilfully the property left by Monsieur Silas Piédefer that he was enabled to reduce the official liquidation to eight hundred thousand francs, while really receiving twelve hundred thousand. He did not announce his return to his wife; but, whilst she was suffering indescribable ills, he built farms, he dug ditches, he planted trees, he gave himself up to heroic clearings of land which caused him to be considered as one of the most distinguished agriculturists of Berri. The four hundred thousand francs taken from his wife were devoted in the course of three years to this operation, and the property of Anzy should, within a given period, bring in seventy-two thousand francs of income, clear of taxes. As to the eight hundred thousand francs, he placed them at four and a half per cent., at eighty francs, thanks to the financial crisis due to the ministry called that of the 1st of March. In thus procuring forty-eight thousand francs of income for his wife, he considered himself as quits with her. Could he not show to her the twelve hundred thousand francs on the day

on which the four and a half should exceed a hundred francs? His importance in Sancerre was only excelled by the richest landed proprietor in France, whom he rivalled. He saw himself possessed of a hundred and forty thousand francs of income, of which ninety in landed funds constituted his majorat. After having figured up that apart from his revenues he paid ten thousand francs in taxes, three thousand francs in expenses, ten thousand francs to his wife and twelve hundred to his mother-in-law, he announced in the midst of the Literary Society :

"It is asserted that I am a miser, that I expend nothing, my expenses amount already to twenty-six thousand, five hundred francs a year. And I shall have to pay for the education of my two children! This will doubtless not give pleasure to Milaud de Nevers, but the second house of La Baudraye will have perhaps as fine a career as that of the first. I shall probably go to Paris to solicit from the King of the French the title of count—Monsieur Roy is a count,—it will doubtless give pleasure to my wife, to be called 'Madame la Comtesse.'"

All this was said with such admirable coolness that not one hearer dared to deride this little man. The president Boirouge alone replied to him :

"In your place, I should think myself happy only if I had a daughter—"

"But," answered the baron, "I shall soon go to Paris—"

*

In the beginning of the year 1842, Madame de la Baudraye, always conscious that she was held merely as a makeshift, had returned to her plan of immolating herself for Lousteau's comfort,—she had resumed her black garments; but now she wore mourning, for her pleasures had changed to remorse. She experienced too often a feeling of shame at herself not to be conscious at times of the weight of her chain, and her mother surprised her in those moments of deep reflection in which the vision of the future plunges the unhappy one into a sort of torpor. Madame Piédefer, counselled by her confessor, watched for the moment of weariness which this priest predicted would come, and her voice then pleaded for the children. She contented herself by urging a separation of domicile, without exacting a separation of hearts.

In real life, these species of violent situations do not terminate as in books, by death or by catastrophes skilfully brought about; they finish much less poetically by disgust, by the withering of all the flowers of the soul, by the commonness of daily habits, but very often also by another passion which

strips a woman of all that interest with which women are traditionally surrounded. Now, when the good sense, the law of social conventionalities, the family interest, all the elements of that which is called public morality under the Restoration, in hatred of the phrase Catholic religion, was supported by the consciousness of wounds a little too deep; when the weariness of devotion had arrived almost at failing, and when, in this situation, a too violent blow, one of those basenesses which men never allow to be perceived but by women of whom they think themselves always masters, comes to put the finishing touch to disgust, to disenchantment, the hour has finally arrived for that friend who is seeking to effect this cure. Madame Piédefer had then but little to do to remove the film from her daughter's eyes. She sent for the avocat-général. Monsieur de Clagny completed the work by affirming to Madame de la Baudraye that, if she abandoned her life with Étienne, her husband would leave her her children, would permit her to live in Paris and would give her the disposition of her property.

"What an existence!" said he. "By using precautions, with the aid of pious and charitable women, you might have a salon and regain a position. Paris is not Sancerre!"

Dinah turned over to Monsieur de Clagny the task of negotiating a reconciliation with the little old man. Monsieur de la Baudraye had sold his wines well, he had sold his wool, he had cleared off that part of his estate which he had reserved, and

he had come to Paris, without saying anything about it to his wife, to invest two hundred thousand francs there by purchasing, in the Rue de l'Arcade, a charming hôtel that had been on the market through the liquidation of a great aristocratic fortune badly compromised. A member of the council-general of his department since 1826, and paying ten thousand francs of taxes, he found himself doubly within the conditions required by the new law of the peerage. Some time before the general election of 1842 he declared his candidacy in case he was not made peer of France. He demanded also the title of count and to be promoted to commander of the Legion of Honor. In the elections, everything that could consolidate the dynastic nominations was allowable in the eyes of the ministers; now, in case Monsieur de la Baudraye should be acquired by the government, Sancerre would become more than ever the rotten borough of "the doctrine." Monsieur de Clagny, whose talents and modesty were becoming more and more appreciated, supported Monsieur de la Baudraye; he demonstrated that in the elevation to the peerage of this courageous agriculturist, guarantees would be given to the material interests. Monsieur de la Baudraye, once made count, peer of France and commander of the Legion of Honor, had the vanity to wish to be represented by a wife and by a well-appointed household,—he wished, as he said, to enjoy life. He therefore requested his wife, in a letter which the avocat-général dictated, to inhabit his hôtel, to furnish it, to display in it all that taste

of which so many proofs charmed him, he said, in his Château d'Anzy. The new count observed to his wife that their territorial interests forbade his leaving Sancerre, whilst the education of their sons required her to remain in Paris. The complying husband therefore charged Monsieur de Clagny with the task of remitting to Madame la Comtesse sixty thousand francs for the interior arrangement of the Hôtel de la Baudraye, recommending that a marble slab be inserted over the porte cochère with this inscription: *Hôtel de la Baudraye*. Also, while rendering to his wife an account of the settling of the Silas Piédefer estate, Monsieur de la Baudraye announced the investment at four and a half per cent. of the eight hundred thousand francs received in New York, and allotted her this investment for her expenses, including that of the education of the children. Apparently obliged to come to Paris during a part of the session of the Chamber of Peers, he asked his wife to reserve for him a little apartment in an entresol over the servants' rooms.

"Ah! now! but he is becoming young, he is becoming a gentleman, he is becoming magnificent; what is he yet going to become? it is enough to make you tremble," said Madame de la Baudraye.

"He is satisfying all the desires which you formed at twenty," replied the magistrate.

The comparison between her future destiny and her actual destiny was not to be supported by Dinah. The very day before, Anna de Fontaine had turned her head away so as not to see her dear

friend of the Chamarolles Institute. Dinah said to herself:

"I am a countess, I shall have on my carriage the blue mantling of the peerage, and in my salon the greatest literary celebrities—I will look at her, I will!"—

This little enjoyment weighed with all its effectiveness at the moment of conversion, as the scorn of the world had formerly weighed on her happiness.

One fine day in May, 1842, Madame de la Baudraye paid all the debts of her household, and left a thousand écus on the bundle of receipts of all these accounts. After having sent her mother and her children to the Hôtel de la Baudraye, she waited for Lousteau all dressed, as if to go out. When the ex-king of her heart came in for dinner, she said to him:

"I have nothing to eat in the house, my friend. Madame de la Baudraye invites you to dinner at the *Rocher de Cancale*. Come!"

She led Lousteau away, stupefied at the little independent air assumed by this woman who only that morning had been subservient to his smallest caprices, for she also had been playing a part for the last two months!

"Madame de la Baudraye is *ficelée*—dressed out—as if for a *first*," said he, making use of the abbreviation by which in the slang of the journalists they designated a first representation.

"Do not forget the respect which you owe to Madame de la Baudraye," said Dinah gravely.

"I no longer wish to know the meaning of that word *ficelée*—"

"Is Didine in rebellion?" he asked, taking her by the waist.

"There is no longer any Didine, you have killed her, my friend," she replied, disengaging herself. "And I give you the first representation of Madame la Comtesse de la Baudraye—"

"It is then true, our insect is a peer of France?"

"The nomination will be in the *Moniteur* this evening, Monsieur de Clagny informed me, he himself passing up to the court of cassation."

"In fact," said the journalist, "the social entomology should be represented in the Chamber—"

"My friend, we are separating for ever," said Madame de la Baudraye, suppressing the tremor in her voice. "I have dismissed the two servants. When you return, you will find your household all regulated, and without any debts. I shall have for you always, but secretly, the heart of a mother. Let us leave each other quietly, without noise, like people who are *comme il faut*. Have you any reproach to make to me concerning my conduct during these six years?"

"None, unless it is to have wrecked my life and destroyed my future," he said in a bitter tone. "You have read a great deal in the book by Benjamin Constant, and you have even studied the last article that has been written, but you have only read it with a woman's eyes. Although you have one of those fine intelligences which would make

the fortune of a poet, you have never ventured to place yourself at a man's point of view. This book, my dear, has two sexes. Do you understand?—We have established the fact that there are male and female books, blond and black—In *Adolphe,* the women see only Ellénore, the young men see Adolphe, the men of the world see Ellénore and Adolphe, the men of politics see the social life! You have dispensed with the power of entering into Adolphe's soul, like your critic, moreover, who has seen only Ellénore. That which kills that poor fellow, my dear, is to have sacrificed his future to a woman; to no longer be able to be any of those things which he should have become, neither ambassador, nor minister, nor chamberlain, nor poet, nor rich. He has given six years of his energy, at that period of life during which a man can accept the roughness of any apprenticeship whatever, to a petticoat which he precedes in the career of ingratitude, for a woman who has been able to leave her first lover will sooner or later leave the second. In short, Adolphe is an insipid, blond German, who does not feel himself strong enough to deceive Ellénore. He is of those Adolphes who spare their Ellénore dishonorable quarrels, complaints, and who say to themselves: 'I will not speak of that which I have lost! I will not always be displaying the royal importance of my severed fist, as did Ramorny in *The Fair Maid of Perth;*' but those, my dear, they are forsaken—Adolphe is the descendant of a good family, an aristocratic heart that desires to re-enter

the path of honors, and recover his social dowry, his consideration that has been compromised. You are representing at this moment the two personages at once. You are conscious of the pain caused by a lost position, and you think you have the right to abandon a poor lover who has had the misfortune to believe you sufficiently superior to admit that, if with a man the heart should be constant, the fair sex may give themselves up to caprices—"

"And do you believe that I would not make it my affair to restore to you that which I have made you lose? Be easy," replied Madame de la Baudraye, overwhelmed at this attack, "your Ellénore does not die, and, if God lends her life, if you change your conduct, if you renounce lorettes and actresses, we will find you something better than Félicie Cardot."

Each of the two lovers became gloomy,—Lousteau feigned sadness, he wished to appear dry and cold; whilst Dinah, really unhappy, listened to the reproaches of her heart.

"Why," said Lousteau, "should we not end as we should have commenced, conceal our love from all eyes, and see each other secretly?"

"Never!" said the new countess, assuming a glacial air. "Can you not understand that we are, after all, finite beings? Our sentiments appear to us to be infinite because of the presentiment which we have of Heaven; but they have, here below for limits, the forces of our organization. There are soft and cowardly natures that can receive an infinite number of wounds and persist; but there are

those more finely tempered which end by breaking under the blows. You have to me—"

"Oh! enough," he said, *"let us make no more copy!*—Your article seems to me unnecessary, for you can justify yourself by a single word: *I no longer love!*—"

"Ah! it is I who no longer love?—" she cried in astonishment.

"Certainly. You have reasoned it out, that I cause you more vexations, more weariness than pleasure, and you leave your associate—"

"I leave him!—" she cried, lifting both her hands.

"Did you not just say: *Never?*—"

"Well, yes, then, *forever!*—" she replied forcefully.

This *forever,* inspired by the fear of falling again under Lousteau's authority, was interpreted by him as the end of his power, from the moment when Dinah became insensible to his scornful sarcasms. The journalist could not restrain a tear,—he was losing a sincere and unlimited affection. He had found in Dinah the most gentle La Vallière, the most agreeable Pompadour that an egotist who was not a king could desire; and, like the child who perceives that by dint of teasing his cockchafer he has finally killed it, Lousteau wept. Madame de la Baudraye fled out of the little salon in which she had been dining, paid for the dinner and took refuge in the Rue de l'Arcade, reproaching herself and thinking herself cruel.

Dinah, who had made of her hôtel a model of comfortable furnishing, metamorphosed herself; but this double metamorphosis cost thirty thousand francs beyond the sum allotted by the new peer of France. The fatal event which caused to the house of Orléans the loss of its heir presumptive, having made necessary the meeting of the Chambers in August, 1842, the little La Baudraye came to present his titles to the noble Chamber sooner than he had anticipated, and then saw the work that his wife had done; he was so charmed with it that he gave the thirty thousand francs without making the least observation, as formerly he had given eight thousand for the furnishing of La Baudraye. On his return from the Luxembourg, where, according to custom, he had been presented by two peers, the Baron de Nucingen and the Marquis de Montriveau, the new count encountered the old Duc de Chaulieu, one of his former creditors, on foot, carrying an umbrella, whilst he was comfortably installed in a small, low carriage, on the panels of which glittered his arms with the motto: *Deo sic patet fides et hominibus*. This comparison dropped into his heart a dose of that balm with which the bourgeoisie have been intoxicating themselves since 1830. Madame de la Baudraye was terrified in seeing her husband again better than he had been on the day of their marriage. Flushed with superlative joy, the abortion triumphed at sixty-four years of age with the life which had been denied him, with the family which the handsome Milaud de Nevers had forbidden him

to have, with his wife who received at dinner Monsieur and Madame de Clagny, the Curé of the Assumption and his two introducers in the Chamber. He caressed his children with a charming foolishness. The beauty of the table service received his approbation.

"Those are from the wool of Berri," he said, showing to Monsieur de Nucingen the covers of the dishes surmounted by his new coronet, "they are of silver."

Although a prey to a profound melancholy, suppressed with the strength of a truly superior woman, Dinah was charming, intellectual, and above all, appeared in her court mourning to have regained her youth.

"It would be said," exclaimed the little La Baudraye, indicating his wife to Monsieur de Nucingen, "that the countess was less than thirty!"

"Ah! *Matam ees dirty years olt?*" replied the baron, who made use of the consecrated jests, seeing in them a sort of small change for conversation.

"In every sense of the word," replied the countess, "for I am thirty-five, and I hope indeed I have a little heartfelt passion—"

"Yes, my wife has ruined me in bric-à-brac, in Chinoiseries—"

"Madame has developed this taste early," said the Marquis de Montriveau, smiling.

"Yes," replied the little La Baudraye, looking coldly at the marquis, whom he had known at Bourges, "you know that she picked up in '25, '26

and '27 for more than a million those curiosities which make of Anzy a museum—"

"What self-assurance!" thought Monsieur de Clagny in seeing this little miser from the provinces sustain himself at the height of his new position.

The misers have economies of every kind to manifest. The day after the vote of the law of the regency by the Chamber, the little peer of France went back to look after his vintages at Sancerre and resumed his former habits.

During the winter of 1842, the Comtesse de la Baudraye, aided by the avocat-général of the court of cassation, endeavored to form a society around her. Naturally, she had a day on which to receive; she made a distinction among the celebrities, she wished to see only those who were serious and of a ripe age. She endeavored to find distraction in going to the Italiens and to the Opéra. Twice a week she took there her mother and Madame de Clagny, whom her husband forced to see Madame de la Baudraye. But, notwithstanding her intelligence, her agreeable manners, notwithstanding her carriage as a woman of the world, she was happy only in her children, on whom she lavished all her thwarted affections. The admirable Monsieur de Clagny recruited women for the countess's society, and he succeeded! But he succeeded much better with the devout ladies than with the women of the world.

"They weary her!" he said to himself in terror, as he contemplated his idol matured by sorrow,

paled with remorse, and at that time in all the brilliancy of a beauty regained by her luxurious life and by her maternity.

The devoted magistrate, supported in his work by the mother and by the curé of the parish, was admirable in expedients. He served up every Wednesday some celebrity from Germany, England, Italy or Prussia, to his dear countess; he vaunted her as an incomparable woman to men to whom she did not say two words, but to whom she listened with such profound attention, that they went away quite convinced of her superiority. Dinah vanquished at Paris by her silence, as she had at Sancerre by her loquacity. From time to time some epigram upon men and things, or some observation upon the absurdities, revealed a woman accustomed to the arrangement of ideas, and who, four years previously, had rejuvenated Lousteau's feuilleton. This period was for the passion of the poor magistrate like that season called Saint Martin's summer in the years that have no sun. He made himself more of an old man than he really was in order to have the right to be Dinah's friend without compromising her; but, as if he had been youthful, handsome and compromising, he kept himself at a distance like a man who should conceal his happiness. He endeavored to envelop in the most profound secrecy his little attentions, his slight gifts which Dinah displayed openly. He endeavored to attach dangerous significations to his slightest obediences.

"He acts a passion," said the countess, laughing.

She derided Monsieur de Clagny to his face, and the magistrate said to himself:

"She concerns herself about me!"

"I have made so great an impression on that poor man," she said laughingly to her mother, "that, if I should say yes to him, I believe that he would say no."

One evening, Monsieur de Clagny brought home, in his wife's company, his dear countess absorbed in deep thought. All three had been to see the first representation of *La Main Droite et la Main Gauche,* the first drama by Léon Gozlan.

"Of what are you thinking?" asked the magistrate, frightened by his idol's melancholy.

The persistency of the hidden but profound sadness which affected the countess was a dangerous evil which the avocat-général did not know how to combat, for sincere love is often awkward, especially when it is not shared. True love borrows its form from the character. Now, the worthy magistrate loved in the manner of Alceste, while Madame de la Baudraye wished to be loved in the manner of Philinte.* The weaknesses and failings of love agree but ill with the loyalty of the Misanthrope. Thus Dinah kept herself carefully from opening her heart to her *patito.* How could she dare to admit that she regretted sometimes her former mire. She was conscious of an enormous void in the worldly life, she did not know to whom to appeal with her

* Alceste, Philinte, contrasting characters in Molière's *Misanthrope.*

successes, her triumphs, her toilets. Sometimes the memory of her miseries returned mingled with the memory of devouring voluptuousness. She was disposed sometimes to be vexed at Lousteau that he paid no attention to her, she would have liked to receive letters from him, either tender or furious. As Dinah made no reply, the magistrate repeated his question, taking the hand of the countess and pressing it between his own with a devout air.

"Will you have the right hand or the left?" she said with a smile.

"The left hand," he said, "for I presume that you are speaking of falsehood and of truth."

"Well, I have seen him," she replied, speaking so as to be heard only by the magistrate. When I saw him sad, profoundly discouraged, I said to myself: 'Has he any cigars? has he any money?'"

"Oh! if you wish to know the truth, I will tell you," exclaimed Monsieur de Clagny, "that he is living in marital relations with Fanny Beaupré. You have wrested this confidence from me; I should never have made it to you, you would perhaps have given me credit for somewhat generous sentiments."

Madame de la Baudraye grasped the hand of the avocat-général.

"You have for a husband," she said to her chaperon, "one of the rarest of men. Ah! why—"

She buried herself in her corner and looked out through the windows of the coupé; but she sup-

pressed the rest of her phrase, which the avocat-général divined: "Why has not Lousteau a little of the nobility of heart of your husband?"

Nevertheless, this piece of news dissipated Madame de la Baudraye's melancholy, she threw herself into the life of the women of the world; she wished to have success and she obtained it; but she made but little progress in the world of women, she experienced difficulties in introducing herself there. In the month of March, the priests, friends of Madame Piédefer and the avocat-général, struck a great blow by causing Madame la Comtesse de la Baudraye to be named as collector for the work of charity founded by Madame de Carcado. Finally she was appointed at court to collect subscriptions for the victims of the earthquake in Guadeloupe. The Marquise d'Espard, to whom Monsieur de Canalis was reading the names of these ladies at the Opéra, said, on hearing that of the countess:

"I have been in this world a long time and I do not remember anything finer than the measures that are being taken to preserve the honor of Madame de la Baudraye."

During the spring days, which a caprice of our climate caused to shine upon Paris in the first week of the month of March, 1843, and during which the Champs-Élysées might be seen leafy and green as far as Longchamps, the lover of Fanny Beaupré had, in his promenades, already seen Madame de la Baudraye several times without being seen by her. He

had then more than once been bitten to the heart by one of those impulses of envy and jealousy familiar enough to those born and reared in the provinces, when he saw again his former mistress comfortably seated in the back of a handsome carriage, beautifully dressed, with a thoughtful air, and with her two children, one at each door. He reviled himself all the more inwardly that he was at this moment in the grip of one of the sharpest of all distresses, a hidden one. He was, like all those whose natures are essentially vain and light, sensitive to that singular point of honor which consists in not being brought down in the eyes of his public, which causes legal crimes to be committed by the men of the Bourse that they may not be driven from the temple of stock-jobbing, which gives to certain criminals the courage to commit acts of virtue. Lousteau, dined and breakfasted, smoked, as if he were rich. He would not, for an inheritance, have failed to purchase the very dearest cigars, for himself as for the sorry dramatists or the prose writer with whom he was entering upon a negotiation. He took his promenades in varnished boots; but he lived in fear of seizures of goods which, in the language of the sheriff's officers, had received the last sacraments. Fanny Beaupré possessed nothing that could be pawned, and his receipts were completely stopped! After having exhausted the utmost possible limit of advances from the reviews, from the journals and from the book publishers, Étienne no longer knew with what ink to make gold. The gaming tables, so

awkwardly suppressed, could no longer liquidate, as formerly, the bills of exchange drawn upon their green cloth by poverty in despair. Finally, the journalist had arrived at such a degree of indigence that he had just borrowed from the poorest of his friends, from Bixiou whom he had never asked for anything, a hundred francs. That which pained Lousteau the most, it was not that he owed five thousand francs, but to see him stripped of all his elegance, of his furniture, acquired by so many privations, enriched by Madame de la Baudraye. Now, on the 3d of April, a yellow bill, torn down by the porter after having sparkled upon the wall, had announced the sale of some fine furniture for the following Saturday, the day of sales by authority of the law.

Lousteau was taking a promenade, smoking cigars and searching for ideas: for, in Paris, ideas are in the air, they smile at you from the corner of a street, they spring up from under the wheel of a cabriolet with a jet of mud! The idler had already been searching for ideas for articles and for subjects for novels during a whole month; but he had found nothing but friends who dragged him off to dinner, to the theatre, and who intoxicated his grief away by assuring him that the wine of Champagne would inspire him.

"Take care," said to him one evening the atrocious Bixiou, who was capable at the same time of giving a hundred francs to a comrade and of piercing him to the heart with a word. "Through going

to bed always fuddled, you will wake up some morning mad."

On the evening before, the Friday, the unfortunate man, notwithstanding his habitual poverty, was affected like a man condemned to death. Formerly, he would have said: "Bah! my furniture is old, I will renew it." But he felt himself incapable of recommencing the literary *tours de force*. The book trade, ruined by pirating, paid but little. The journals haggled with the broken-down talents, as did the directors of theatres with the tenors who dropped a note. And he walked doggedly on, his eyes on the crowd without seeing anything, the cigar in his mouth, and his hands in his armholes, his countenance inwardly contracted but outwardly wearing a false smile on the lips. Then he saw Madame de la Baudraye pass in her carriage, she came out on the boulevard by the Rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin on her way to the Bois.

"There is no longer anything but that," he said to himself.

He returned home to bedeck himself. In the evening, at seven o'clock, he went in a hackney coach to Madame de la Baudraye's door, and requested the concierge to deliver to the countess a message to this effect:

Will Madame la Comtesse do Monsieur Lousteau the kindness to receive him for a moment, and at this moment?

This note was sealed with a seal which had formerly been used by both lovers. Madame de la Bau-

draye had caused to be engraved on a true Oriental cornelian: *Because!* A great word, woman's word, the word which can explain everything, even the creation. The countess had just finished her toilet to go to the Opéra, Friday being her box-night. She turned pale when she saw the seal.

"Let him wait!" she said, putting the note in her corsage.

She had presence of mind enough to conceal her agitation, and asked her mother to put the children to bed. Then she sent word for Lousteau to be admitted, and she received him in a boudoir adjoining her great salon, the doors open. She was intending to go to a ball after the theatre, she had put on an exquisite dress in broché silk, with stripes alternately lustreless and filled with flowers, of a straw color. Her gloves, embroidered and tasselled, revealed her beautiful white arms. She was sparkling with laces, and wore all the pretty futilities required by the fashion of the day. Her coiffure, à la Sévigné, gave her a fine, intelligent air. A collar of pearls upon her neck resembled flaws in the snow.

"What is the matter with you, monsieur?" said the countess, putting out her foot from under her dress to crush a velvet cushion. "I believed, I hoped to be perfectly forgotten—"

"If I should say to you *never,* you would not wish to believe me," said Lousteau, who remained standing and began to walk about, all the while chewing flowers which he took at each turn from the jardinières whose heavy clusters filled the boudoir with fragrance.

A moment of silence prevailed, Madame de la Baudraye, in examining Lousteau, found him arrayed as would be the most scrupulous dandy.

"There is no one but you in the world who can help me and offer me a perch, for I am drowning, and I have already swallowed more than one mouthful!"—he said, stopping before Dinah and appearing to yield to a supreme effort. "If you see me here, it is because my affairs are going devilishly bad."

"Enough!" she said, "I understand you."

There was another pause, during which Lousteau turned round, took out his handkerchief and appeared to wipe away a tear.

"What do you require, Étienne?" she resumed in a maternal voice. "We are at this moment old comrades; speak to me as you would speak to—to Bixiou—"

"To prevent my furniture from jumping over to-morrow to the auctioneers' rooms, eighteen hundred francs! To pay back my friends, as much; three quarters due the landlord, which you know—*My Aunt* requires five hundred francs—"

"And you, to live on?"

"Ah! I have my pen!—"

"It has to move under a weight of which we are not conscious when we read you—" she said, smiling subtly. "I have not the amount which you ask of me—Come to-morrow, at eight o'clock, the bailiff will certainly wait until nine, especially if you bring him to pay him."

She felt the necessity of sending Lousteau away, and he feigned to not have the strength to look at her; but she was in a mood of compassion that might unloosen all the Gordian knots which are tied by society.

"Thanks!" said she, rising and offering her hand to Lousteau, "your confidence has done me good!—Oh! it is a long time since I have felt so much joy in my heart—"

Lousteau took her hand, carried it to his heart and pressed it tenderly.

"A drop of water in the desert, and—by the hand of an angel!—God always does things well!"

This was said half jestingly and half tenderly; but, you may rest well assured, it was as fine, as a piece of theatricals, as that of Talma in his famous rôle of Leicester, where everything is represented by shadings of this kind. Dinah felt the heart beat through the thickness of the cloth,—it beat with pleasure, for the journalist was escaping from the judicial hawk, but it beat also with a desire very natural at the aspect of Dinah rejuvenated and renewed by opulence. Madame de la Baudraye, examining Étienne covertly, saw his physiognomy in harmony with all the flowers of love which, for her, were springing into life again in that palpitating heart; she endeavored to penetrate with her eyes, once, into the eyes of him whom she had so much loved, but a tumultuous blood rushed through her veins and confused her head. These two beings then exchanged the same reddening glance that, on

the Quai of Cosne, had given to Lousteau the audacity to rumple the organdie dress. The bohemian drew Dinah toward him by the waist, she allowed herself to yield, and the two cheeks touched.

"Hide yourself, here is my mother!" exclaimed Dinah, in a fright.

And she hastened to meet Madame Piédefer.

"Mamma," she said—this was for the severe Madame Piédefer a caress which never missed its effect,—"would you do me a great service, take the carriage, go yourself to the house of our banker, Monsieur Mongenod, with the little note which I am going to give you to get six thousand francs. Come, come, it is a case of doing a good action, come into my chamber."

And she carried off her mother, who seemed to wish to see the person with whom her daughter had been talking in the boudoir.

Two days later, Madame Piédefer was in intimate consultation with the curé of the parish. After having listened to the lamentations of this despairing old mother, the curé said to her gravely:

"All moral regeneration that is not supported by a profound religious sentiment, and pursued in the bosom of the Church, is built upon foundations of sand—All the observances, so minute and so little understood, that Catholicism commands, are so many dikes necessary to restrain the tempests of the evil spirit. Therefore you must bring madame your daughter to fulfil all her religious duties, and we will save her—"

Ten days after this conference, the Hôtel de la Baudraye was closed. The countess and her children, her mother, in short, all her household, which she had increased by a preceptor, had departed for the Sancerrois, where Dinah intended to pass the summer. She was charming to the count, it was said. Thus the Muse of Sancerre returned quite honestly to the family and to marriage duties; but, according to some slanderers, she was obliged to return, for the wishes of the little peer of France were doubtless about to be accomplished, he expected a daughter!—Finally, Gatien and Monsieur Gravier surrounded the beautiful countess with servile cares and attentions. The president's son, who, during the long absence of Madame de la Baudraye, had been taking lessons as a *lion* in Paris, had, it was said at the literary society, excellent chances for pleasing this superior woman, now disillusioned. Others bet on the preceptor, and Madame Piédefer pleaded the cause of religion.

In 1844, about the middle of June, the Comte de la Baudraye was taking his promenade upon the Mael of Sancerre, accompanied by his two pretty children; he met Monsieur Milaud, the procureur-général, who had come to Sancerre on business, and he said to him:

"Cousin, see my children—"

"Ah! see *our* children," replied the malicious procureur-général.

Paris, June 1843—August 1844.

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